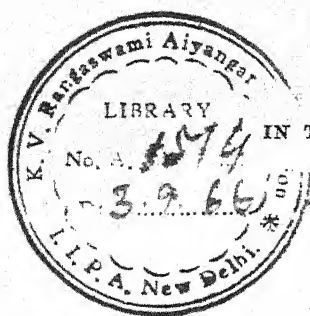


ESSAYS  
ON  
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL  
SCIENCE,

CONTRIBUTED CHIEFLY TO  
THE EDINBURGH REVIEW.

BY WILLIAM R. GREG.



IN TWO VOLUMES.

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# ESSAYS

ON

## POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

CONTRIBUTED TO VARIOUS REVIEWS.

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### THE FERMENTATION OF EUROPE.\*

THE spring of 1848 will be memorable through all time, both for the magnitude of the political events which it has witnessed, and for the unexampled rapidity with which they have succeeded each other. Demands — concessions — constitutions — revolutions — abdications — have trod upon the heels of one another, with a speed which takes away the breath of the beholder. The quiet of last year has been followed by a series of explosions, almost, if not altogether, without precedent; and the hopes and fears of all who are interested in the progress and amelioration of humanity are excited to the highest point. For ourselves, our hopes greatly predominate over our fears; not, perhaps, for the immediate present, but for the not very remote future; not, perhaps, for France, but for Europe, and the world.

Of the present, and the immediate future of France, the aspect seems very gloomy. We have no hopes,

\* From the "Economist" of April, 1848.

either from the present movement or the present men. The day for the regeneration of that unlearning and impure country has not yet dawned. "Oh! that she had known, in this her day of opportunity, the things which belong unto her peace; but alas! they are hidden from her eyes." Upon her alone, of all the nations of Europe, the experience of the past, in which she was the greatest sharer and sufferer, seems to have been thrown away. She alone, like her old nightmares, the Bourbons, seems to have learnt nothing, and forgotten nothing\*; to have forgotten no old watchwords, and learned no new wisdom.

The popular outbreak, and the overthrow of the late government, caused us little surprise, and no regret. For that unwise monarch, who, for the last seventeen years, has been labouring with patient and unresting industry to destroy the freedom and complete the demoralisation of his country, we can feel little compassion. It is just that he, whose whole regal career has been a series of pertinacious treasons against that popular spirit which placed him on the throne, should be at last ejected with ludicrous ignominy in the extremity of age. It is just that he, who has so unceasingly plotted for the aggrandisement of his family and the augmentation of his enormous wealth, and has not scrupled at means which would have soiled the hands of a notary or a huckster, should in the end be flung upon a foreign shore, stripped of his vast possessions, and almost dependent upon eleemosynary aid. It is just that he, who was prepared to entangle his country in a war with England, for the sake of gaining a royal position for his son, should be reduced, with that son, to find himself in England, a fugitive, and a petitioner for

\* Talleyrand's remark on the Bourbon family, after the restoration, was, "Ces gens là n'ont rien oublié, ni rien appris."

shelter. He has sown the wind, and it was just that he should reap the whirlwind.

"*La charte sera désormais une vérité*," exclaimed Louis Philippe, when he ascended the throne in 1830; but instead of a truth, he has made it a nullity. Step by step he augmented the power of the crown, and restricted the privileges of the people; he curtailed the liberty of the press, and the security for fair trial to political offenders, while he used the machinery of corruption (always too mighty and well organised in France) with unparalleled and unsparing profusion; till every vestige of individual liberty had been swept away. So completely had this work been accomplished, that men might be, and were, imprisoned without warrant, and kept in prison without either themselves or any one else knowing what was the charge against them: and whatever wrong or outrage might be committed against a citizen by an authorised agent of the "citizen king," the former had no refuge or redress; he could not apply for protection or amends from a court of law, without first asking permission from the king in council, the very notion of which was scouted as an absurdity; so that unless he had a friend in the Chamber of Deputies, to interrogate the minister in his behalf, his demand for justice was as echoless and ineffectual as that of one crying in the wilderness.

Therefore, we did not wonder that the French people, who seem to be as impatient of oppression as they are unfit for freedom, arose in a frenzy to reconquer their rights. Nor did we wonder that when Louis Philippe abdicated, they at once, and, as it were, instinctively, declared for a republic. Every branch of the Bourbons had been tried in turn; and every branch had proved so ingrainedly and incurably bad, that we scarcely see that any choice was left them. Therefore, though not republicans ourselves, it is from no dislike of that form of

government, still less from any admiration of the government it has superseded, that we are led to augur ill for France, but from the character and condition of the people—from the mode in which the revolution was effected—from all the proceedings of the Provisional Government—and from the conduct and manifested animus of the nation, ever since the memorable 24th of February.

In the first place, there does not seem to be now in France, any more than at any previous period, the slightest conception of, or care for, what we in England call personal liberty—the liberty of the subject. Their only idea of liberty seems to be equality. Political rights—the right of suffrage—the right to a free press—the abolition of the exclusive rights and privileges of others, they comprehend and contend for. But individual freedom—the right of unfettered action and speech—the right of every man to do what he likes so long as he interferes not with the equivalent right of others—exemption from all unnecessary restraint, and from all authority but that of recorded or adjudicated law—security against the illegal exercise of power by the agents of the government—for these the French do not ask, of these they seem not to comprehend the importance. Not only have they no *habeas corpus*, but in all their many opportunities they have never, we believe, demanded it. The constitutions of 1789, 1793, 1795, the 18th Brumaire, the restoration, the hundred days, 1830, all passed away without conferring this inestimable boon—this *sine quâ non* of freedom; and the result is, that never in their wildest days of licence have Frenchmen enjoyed half the liberty—half the security from, or security against, the tyranny of their sovereign or their neighbour, as the poorest and meanest Englishman has possessed for the last century and a half. To all appearance the revolution of 1848



will pass away like its predecessors, without having bestowed on the French nation this easy, this simple, this grand, yet apparently this undesired achievement.

Again, in France (if we except a short period in 1789) *there has never been a struggle for liberty*: what have been termed such, have, in sad and sober truth, been simply *struggles for the administration of a tyranny*. The centralised form of their government is greatly to blame for this. To the French imagination, the simplest, shortest, and easiest way of conquering their liberty, when oppression has become unbearable, has always been to seize upon the reins of power. Other nations wring concessions from their governors: the French "cashier" their governors, and become governors themselves. But the French governmental administration is a machine of tremendous power, of immense extent, of universal interpenetration. He who seizes the reins of government in France, finds himself—owing to the centralisation which is its essence—absolute master of every functionary in every department of administration throughout that vast empire. Through these functionaries he finds himself invested with almost uncontrolled power over every one of his fellow-countrymen. He is at the head of the police, justice, gendarmerie, finance, education, not merely in Paris, but in the remotest and obscurest corner of the land. He finds himself, *by the accident of his position*, a despot, an autocrat; and it is to ask a miracle of human nature, to expect him not to use this despotic power; it is to ask little less than a miracle from a man who has sprung from an oppressed caste—unused to the sweets, uninured to the difficulties, of rule—to expect him not to use it despotically. Moreover, the very habits of the nation, the very nature of the organisation, force the use of this power upon him. The functionaries, throughout the country, feeling themselves only portions of one great machine—accustomed



to refer everything to their head at Paris—constantly and naturally apply to him for orders, and he is almost *compelled* to act. Whatever party, therefore, assumes the government in France, find themselves necessarily, and *ipso facto*, invested with supreme power, and are expected, called upon, compelled to use it; or the machine of administration would stand still.

How completely this notion—that it is in the power, and is the duty of the government to do everything—is rooted in the minds both of the rulers and the ruled—has been shown with tragic and ludicrous clearness during the last month. We have seen deputations from workmen to ask the Provisional Government to fix the hours of labour, and the rate of wages—from omnibus drivers to ask them to decide the price of fares—from merchants and tradesmen to postpone the dates of bills of exchange—from manufacturers for loans on the security of their goods—from railway employés to ask for a compulsory participation in the profits of capital to which they have not contributed—and, finally, from students to demand the dismissal of an obnoxious professor, and the exclusion of cosmography and natural history from their list of lessons!

Few of our readers, we believe, have any idea of the extent to which this system of centralisation has been carried in France, or what ramified and far reaching power it puts into the hands of the actual rulers, whoever they may be. The following table will aid them to form a just conception of this gigantic machine. It is calculated that there are dependent on the

	Employés.	Francs.
Minister of the Interior	203,900 receiving	46,000,000
Justice - - -	30,280 „	16,000,000
Public Instruction - -	25,000 „	25,000,000
Public Works - -	20,000 „	20,000,000
Trade and Agriculture -	12,000 „	12,000,000

			Employés.		Francs.
Finance	-	-	277,900	receiving	145,000,000
War	-	-	25,000	„	31,000,000
Foreign Affairs	-	-	640	„	8,000,000
Marine	-	-	3,000	„	5,000,000
			<hr/> 597,720		<hr/> 308,000,000

This is the system which a poet, an historian, an editor, an astronomer, and workman, are suddenly called on to administer—an army of 600,000 agents, and a purse of 12,000,000*l.* sterling.

These two remarkable facts, then—the centralised system of administration which pervades all France, and the utter absence of all conception of the true nature of personal liberty, joined to another feature of the national character, as prominent and yet more deplorable, namely an entire want of that perception of what is due to others, that clear sense of the rights of others, which lies at the basis of all real freedom—will explain what else would appear so inexplicable—the astounding proceedings of the Provisional Government, since they took the helm of state into their hands. Their course was comparatively clear; the limits of their sphere of action were defined by the nature of their position, and even by their very name; their duties were confined to the simple tasks of preserving public order, keeping the administrative machine at work, and arranging the details of the mode in which the national will should express itself. It was not for them, mere administrators *ad interim*, but for the nation, to decide for a republic or a monarchy. It was not for them, but for the nation, to enact new laws and abolish old ones. Yet they have issued edicts, and decrees without end; with a profusion, a peremptoriness, and a haste, which neither Napoleon nor Robespierre could have surpassed. They have passed laws, *proprio motu*,

of their own autocratic will, which demanded the gravest deliberation, and involved the most momentous consequences. They have issued ukases affecting the very foundation of the social system. They have imposed new and additional taxation in a most unequal and unjustifiable form. Their very first acts were invasions of the freedom of the subject, more flagrant and undisguised than any of those by which Louis Philippe and Charles X. were held to have deservedly forfeited their thrones. In one short month they have run round the whole cycle of tyranny, spent all the resources of despotism, repeated and exhausted all the obsolete contrivances and low stratagems of arbitrary power. They have seized on property, interfered with contracts, threatened the rich, swamped the respectable, broken faith with the national creditor, influenced elections by terror and chicanery, and displayed, in a word, not only all the ignorance, but all the vices, of a fierce and overbearing democracy. *Therefore, we have no hopes for France.*

The refusal to pay the depositors at the savings' banks, and the suspension of cash payments at the Bank of France, were measures sufficiently discreditable, but which might be defended on the plea of necessity—a necessity, however, which we must not forget was wholly created by their own wild proceedings. But the proceedings which we view with the greatest disapprobation and alarm, both on account of the animus which they manifest, and of the scenes which they so vividly recall, are the barefaced resolutions displayed in the decree for the re-organisation of the National Guard, to swamp the influence of the respectable and educated classes by a forced amalgamation with the mob; the evident determination to scruple at no means for suppressing the expression of opinion on the part of those who love order, who fears the government of the lowest classes,

and who may be supposed to be influenced by a regard to character and rank, as evinced in the famous circular of the minister of the interior; the leading articles which have appeared in journals known to be closely connected with members of the government, couched in no covert language, menacing emigrants, natives, and even foreigners, with the indignation of their country, and threatening those capitalists who refused to subscribe, or did not subscribe largely enough, to the new banks of discount, with public denunciation; and, finally, the firm and almost contemptuous tone in which the government have met the remonstrances of the middle classes, contrasted with the gentleness and timidity\* with which they have submitted to the overbearing dictation of the mob of workmen. These things show that the rock on which the liberty of France was wrecked in 1792 is still as prominent and as perilous as then. *Therefore, it is, that we have no hopes for France.*

But it is the unchanged national character of the French which most inclines us to despair. Such as it was in 1790, such, in many of its features, it is still. It may appear a paradoxical assertion respecting a people so notoriously brave as the French; but, as a general fact, they seem utterly destitute of moral courage. Daring even to rashness in the field—unshrinking even to levity upon the scaffold—bold even to audacity in public, *en masse*, and where bravery can be theatrically displayed—they have individually, it would seem, *no civil courage*. They dare not face the disapprobation and dislike of their countrymen. They dare not differ from the prevalent current of opinion. They cannot swim against the stream. They are in everything the victims and slaves of the prevailing fashion. They dare

\* From this charge, however, we must except Lamartine, who throughout has shown a courage and spirit above all praise.



not risk being in a minority. Hence the suddenness and apparent unanimity of all political movements throughout France. Hence they can always be governed by a small minority. Hence they will generally be governed by the boldest and most desperate among themselves. The wild, the bold, the inconsiderate, the destitute, are the only ones who do not wait to consider whether others will support them. They take advantage of the general discontent, and, by a timely and well contrived *émeute*, possess themselves of the reins of government. Their boldness gives them power. No one knows how few they *are*, but only think how numerous they *may* be; and most people measure their number by their daring. Every one *fears to be left behind* if he delays to join them; it becomes a rush and a scramble to see who will be first to swear allegiance to the self-elected government of yesterday; and thus it suddenly finds itself possessed of supreme power, and may retain it *till its conduct has made some other party desperate enough to rise against it without calculating chances*, when it falls to pieces like a rope of sand. Such has been the history of every popular government in France. Such is, and will be, we anticipate, the history of the present one. It is, we believe, supported *heartily* by a very small minority of the population. Putting aside the *ouvriers* of Paris, Lyons, and Rouen, its real *bonâ fide* friends we do not believe comprise one tenth of the people. With this conviction, it will be readily conceived that, among all the breathless transactions which made up the revolution of February, 1848, we regard as one of the most disquieting and discreditable, the almost instant, unreserved, undeliberating adhesion with which the Provisional Government was hailed throughout the country. However unpopular the old monarchy may have been, it is impossible to believe that all parties in France wished in their hearts for a republic; still less, that all believed

MM. Lamartine, Arago, Louis Blanc, and Albert, the fittest men to guide the vessel of the state. Yet no sooner was the formation of this ministry announced in Paris, and the news spread by telegraph through the departments, than every one hastened to fall prostrate at its feet. Without even waiting to see what its first measures would be — without stopping to consider whether the morals or the ability of its members qualified them for the tremendous task they had undertaken — public bodies, private individuals, marshals, admirals, prefects, princes, deputies — at once, by post, by telegraph, and in person — rushed to swear allegiance to the unknown and untried novelty: and the same week which saw the Monarchy omnipotent and overthrown, saw also the Republic conceived, improvised, installed, announced, acknowledged, and supreme, throughout the length and breadth of the land. *Therefore, we have no hopes for France.*

Not only does there seem to be no deliberation, no exercise, of individual judgment in France: but neither does there seem to be any power or spirit of resistance, or of self-defence. The edicts of a temporary and self-appointed ministry are submitted to by the first bodies in the empire, as humbly and unremonstratingly as if they were the unappealable decrees of fate. The Provisional Government decrees, in the name of equality, that no monuments shall be erected over the graves of the departed — that all shall take their last sleep in one undistinguishable crowd. An edict which thus tramples upon all the most tender and sacred feelings of our nature, which brutally forbids that tribute which in all ages affection has yearned to pay to the relics of departed love, and which generous admiration has felt proud to offer at the shrines of translated excellence and vanished worth, is obeyed with meek and un murmuring pusillanimity. How would such an edict be received in

England? It would be instantaneously fatal to the government which should dare to promulgate it, and to the future career of every individual composing such government.—Again, the Provisional Government decrees the abolition of all titles; and the peers, to a man, lay them down without a murmur. Why, were such a decree issued in England, every peer in the nobility would spend the last drop of his blood in defence even of such unreal honours. And can it be imagined for a moment that all, or most, of the French noblesse, value their titles and decorations as nothing, or agree in their hearts with the spirit of the order which commands their annihilation? No: but the *pluck*, the courage is wanting, to remonstrate or resist. *Therefore, it is, that we have no hopes for France.*

One other most discouraging feature in the social aspect of France at the present moment, and which prevails, also, to a great extent in the sister Republic of America, is the singular absence of all great men. In all turbulent times in other countries—in the first revolution, even in France—distinguished men sprung up, as it were, by magic, and in crowds; men, it is true, “darkly wise,” and “rudely” and irregularly “great,” but still possessed of many of the elements of real grandeur, and many of the qualities of mighty leaders. There were Barnave, Lafayette, Roland, Vergniaud, Danton, Carnot, and the greatest and wildest of all, Mirabeau. *Now*, there is no centre, no rallying point, no salient character, no great name, standing out from the crowd, to which men may look for guidance and salvation. As for the second-rate leaders of the chambers, the men who passed for great under the old régime,—Thiers, Odillon Barrot, and their colleagues,—they are gone, lost, hushed in the stillness of this universal mediocrity. Lamartine, alone, with his brilliant fancy, his elegant culture, his poetic visions, his indomitable

courage, affords a relief to the eye, amid the countless platitudes around him.

The French will answer, that in this very absence of eminent and great men lies their safety and their glory — that great men are dangerous — that in a republic of which equality is the basis and the watchword, they are not wanted and would be out of place. But they have yet to learn that it is only among a people where the *mass* are reasonably good and moderately wise, that great men can be safely dispensed with. No nation, no government, can exist in safety and in honour without the guidance and support of a vast amount of wisdom and of virtue; and if this wisdom and virtue does not pervade and vivify the mass, it must be concentrated in the men who are to govern and control them. Where it is dispersed through a whole people, a democracy becomes possible, reasonable, and safe: where it is confined to a few, nature calls unmistakeably for an aristocracy. On this account, above all others, therefore, do we despair of the present government of France.

A republican form of government is, perhaps, theoretically, the most perfect; it seems, more than any other, to meet the requirements of bare reason. But for a republic to be either safe or stable, three conditions are necessary: — a pervading, generally prevalent sense of justice and morality: a vivid idea, at least, if not a habit, of *municipality*, or self-government; and material well-being, or a steady progress towards it, on the part of the lower classes. *Now, all these elements of security and hope are wanting in France.*

I. It is a painful, and may seem an uncharitable, statement, but we think it is impossible to shut our eyes to the truth that a profound demoralisation, of one kind or another, prevails through both the higher and lower classes of society in France. The disorders and disorganisation of the close of the last century, and the



first fifteen years of this, added to the systematic corruption of the late government, undermined all that the regency and Louis XV. had left undestroyed of that nice sense of honour and scrupulous care of character which was at one time proverbially distinctive of the French nobility. That "sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt stain like a wound," has had a melancholy funeral oration pronounced over its grave, by the ambassador Bresson, the general officer Cubières, the cabinet minister Teste, and the Duke de Choiseul-Praslin; and, unhappily, religion has not stepped in to fill the place left vacant by the demise of a sensitive regard to reputation.

Among the people we perceive a moral deficiency of another kind. They do not seem possessed of that rectitude of feeling, that sense of justice, that quick perception and ready acknowledgment of the rights of others, without which democracy cannot fail to become the most grinding and intolerable of all tyrannies. Their interference with the relations of creditor and debtor—their behaviour to the English workmen, and to their own National Guard—have shown this deficiency in the most glaring manner. It is, perhaps, too much to expect from the people that "charity which seeketh not her own:" but without that strict sense of justice which forbears to seek it by trampling upon the rights of others, no republic can or ought to endure. A sense of duty, and a sense of justice, pervading the community, constitute the *sine quâ non* of a stable and respectable democracy. Its very foundation is national morality.

II. Real and efficient, not merely nominal, municipal institutions, seem essential to instruct and practise a people in habits of self-government. If they have not been experienced in the administration of parish affairs, they will rarely be competent to undertake the adminis-

tration of an empire. England, America, and Switzerland, are essentially municipal. What we have termed the *habit of municipality* pervades all the ideas and social practices of the people. In France it is quite otherwise. The government there is a *bureaucracy*. *The people have never governed themselves*, even during the most levelling periods of their democracies; they are governed by the minister at Paris, through his infinitely numerous agents and subordinates. Every licence is granted by the central authority. Every official throughout the empire — every prefect, mayor, notary, tobacco-dealer, throughout France, is appointed by a minister at Paris, and can be dismissed by him; and as long as this continues to be the case, we do not conceive how either stability or real freedom is to be secured. Republican institutions, and a centralised administration, involve ideas radically contradictory and hostile.

III. Thirdly, and lastly, *we have no hopes for France*, on account of the deplorable material condition, and the still more deplorable material prospect, of her lower classes. This condition is bad enough now, it is steadily deteriorating, and the Provisional Government has taken every step in its power to make this deterioration more rapid, more certain, more difficult of arrest and cure. The most concise summary of facts will suffice to show what fearful elements of danger are in existence, and in active and multiplying operation. The commerce of France, always insignificant for so powerful and extensive an empire, is gradually decaying. The last report of the minister for that department shows a steady and regular diminution of their mercantile marine, which now can only muster one ship as large as 700 tons — the ordinary size of English merchant vessels being 1000 tons, and many of them 1,500 tons. The system of monopoly and protection so long perseveringly pursued, and still so dear to that uneconomic

people—the perverse determination to force manufactures for which their country has no natural capabilities, at the expense of the export trade in those productions for which it is especially adapted—have ended in placing not only the prosperity, but the very subsistence of the country in serious jeopardy. Their wine trade—the most natural and profitable branch of commerce they possess—has long been stagnant and languishing. Their silk trade—to judge by the perpetual complaints of misery on the part of the Lyonese workmen—cannot be in a much more flourishing condition; their other manufactures are maintained by means of an artificial system which *must* fall before the progress of economic science, and which *may*, any hour, be suddenly swept away; their woods, which should have been carefully husbanded for domestic use, have been wastefully consumed in iron furnaces, which produce iron at double the cost at which it might be furnished to them from England, till at length the price of fuel has risen to a height which makes it almost inaccessible to the poor man,—for coal is scarcely to be found in France, and cannot be purchased from England except by means of that export trade which is gradually, and not slowly, drying up.

But the condition and prospects of agriculture on which the vast majority of the population of France depends directly for subsistence, are still more calculated to excite alarm. It appears, from the authorities carefully collected by Mr. M'Culloch, in his recent "Treatise on Succession," that although two thirds of the population are there actually engaged in agricultural occupations, against one third in England, the produce per acre, with an equal soil and a far superior climate, is only one half what it is with us—that already the southern provinces annually import grain to a large amount—that the food of the people has been for a

long time steadily deteriorating, till they are rapidly approaching to the potato diet of the Irish — that *live stock*, the basis of all good farming, is diminishing in an alarming ratio — that nearly all the cavalry horses are obliged to be imported from abroad, so wretched is the native breed — that the consumption of butchers' meat in Paris (and we may conclude in other parts of France likewise) is only one-third what it was in 1812 — and, finally, that this gradual decline in agricultural position is the natural and inevitable result of a law to which, as the offspring and embodiment of their crotchet of equality, the people cling with a fanatical attachment, the law of equal partition — a law which has already been carried out to such an extent, that out of an aggregate of 4,800,000 proprietors, 3,900,000, or *four-fifths*, hold properties averaging only nine acres in extent; nay, so small are many of them, that one-half the whole number are under forty shillings of yearly value.

France, then, presents this alarming combination of circumstances — an increasing population, commerce languishing and contracting, agriculture decaying, and manufactures precarious and valetudinarian, because artificially bolstered up; *with all the causes which have led to these conditions still in active operation*. But this is not all. The new government is occupied with all its might, and with all its ingenuity, in exasperating all these fatal maladies. The revenue is collected with greater and greater difficulty every year, from the increasing poverty of the people; the debt is already immense; the public expenditure far exceeds the income, and can scarcely be diminished, ~~for~~ the present immense army of officials cannot be disbanded till France shall have learned to change centralisation for municipality. Yet the first acts of the Provisional Government have tended enormously to add to this expenditure, by taking,

as it were, the whole unemployed population into its pay; by establishing wages without labour, and national workshops without even the aim or pretence of producing exchangeable commodities; enhancing the cost of production of exportable articles, by allowing the workmen to dictate terms and hours of work to their masters, and thus slaying manufactures and commerce by one treacherous blow; while at the same time they have dried up the most inexhaustible source of revenue by acting with a senseless tyranny, which has at once ruined the affluent, and prostrated financial and commercial credit in the dust. At a single move they have augmented the national expenditure, and not so much crippled, as *shattered* the national resources. With a population already very poor, a decrepit agriculture, the whole commercial and industrial system shaken to its foundation, employment cut away from under the people when most needed to support them, a vast expenditure, a failing revenue, and a government at once incapable and desperate, we see not where their salvation is to come from.

One hope, only one, remains. It lies in a prompt and energetic counter-revolution. It is, perhaps, well for France that the cloven foot should have been shown so soon — that the downward progress of her new rulers should have been so rapid, and the abyss to which they are hurrying so apparent, so yawning, and so near. The Provisional Government and its hearty well-wishers we firmly believe to form at this moment a small and, but for their position, an insignificant minority of the nation. The men of property, the friends of order, merchants, manufacturers, country gentlemen and their peasants, a great proportion of the National Guard, and nearly all the army, look on their proceedings with discontent, anger, and alarm. The circular of Ledru Rollin, the decree for the dissolution of the *Compagnies d'élite*, and

the attempts of the people to disarm those regiments of the line which remained in Paris, and which have been since ordered away, show clearly that the Provisional Government is well aware of this wide-spread feeling of dissatisfaction and hostility. A rallying point—a standard of revolt—is alone wanting. If the royal family had been less heartily disliked and despised than they are; if any one of them had had the spirit to remain for the chance of a revulsion of popular feeling; if there were any great or daring man either among the civil or the military notorieties of the country to commence an opposition, or simply to speak out boldly and loudly what so many millions of his countrymen are thinking, we believe that a single week would suffice to transfer the members of the Provisional Government from the Hôtel de Ville to Vincennes or the Salpêtrière, with an impeachment hanging over their heads, and to save France from the universal ruin which threatens to engulf it. But can such a salient, central, initiative man be found?

But though despairing about France, we are sanguine about the rest of Europe. If only war can be kept at bay, we are hopeful of the constitutional regeneration of both Italy and Germany. We have hopes for both (notwithstanding the known reluctance and perfidy of Ferdinand, and the known incapacity of Francis), because in both countries the people seek to extort concessions from their rulers, not to supersede them; because they seek to govern in concert with their sovereigns, not instead of them; because, intellectually and morally, despite long ages of degradation, they are a far finer race of men than the French; because, cruelly as they have been oppressed, *they struggle for real reforms*, they demand liberty, not equality—the abolition of oppressive privileges, not of harmless titles or beneficial rank. We have hopes especially for the Italians,



because slight as is their experience, small their science in self-government, it is at least equal to that of their rulers, and because, with much poverty, there is little real destitution or sordid misery. We have hopes especially for Sicily, because there the revolution has been effected by the united action of all classes; it has been led by the nobles, and consecrated by the priests; and because the insurgents *know what they want*, and their demands have been steady and consistent. We have hopes for Germany, because the Germans are a loyal and honourable people, with the sense of justice and of brotherhood strong and genuine within them; because they are a reflective, a peaceful, and a moral race; imbued with the *habits of municipality* (though these of late have been sadly overridden by the government functionaries), and with just notions of real personal liberty. Finally, we are full of hope both for Italy and Germany, because it is evident that though France has forgotten the lessons of the past, *they have not*, but retain a lively recollection, a wholesome horror, and a wise distrust, of French sympathy and French fraternisation.

While these are our feelings with regard to the present movement in Italy and Germany,—while we have no hopes for France, we have no fears for England. Though there are many abuses and anomalies in our government, and much sad and terrible misery among our people, every Englishman is conscious that the first are in daily course of exposure and rectification, and that all classes are labouring earnestly and sincerely, if not always wisely, to amend and mitigate the last. Every one is obliged to admit that no phase of moral suffering exists among us without finding many who perseveringly struggle to publish, to alleviate, and to remove it. The poorest have friends in the senate, in the council chamber, in the palace; the lowest can

make their voice heard and their wants known, without having recourse to violence and tumult. Moreover, our system of administration is municipal, not central; order is beloved by us; property is sacred with us; we are accustomed to govern and defend ourselves; we respect the rights of others, and know how to maintain our own. *Therefore, we have no fears for England.*

The wise course for England and Europe to pursue throughout the present crisis seems to us both obvious and simple. We must regard France as suffering in the paroxysm of a strange disease, and draw a *cordon sanitaire* around her, till the violence of the malady shall have spent itself, and the danger of contagion shall be past.



## DIFFICULTIES OF REPUBLICAN FRANCE.\*

MANY of the errors of political philosophers, and many of the failures of practical statesmen, appear to us to have had their origin in the same oversight: both have too commonly ignored, or have not sufficiently studied, the fundamental characteristics, intellectual and moral, which distinguish different nations: they have too generally reasoned and acted as if they had to deal with an abstract or an "average" man, instead of with populations impressed—whether by the hand of Nature, or by the operation of long antecedent circumstances—with marked and distinctive features; endowed with special aptitudes, gifted with peculiar excellences, disqualified by peculiar deficiencies. In consequence of the omission of these considerations, which should form, not only an essential element in their calculations, but almost the foundation of them, their philosophy becomes inapplicable, and their statesmanship ends in disappointment. That nations *are* marked by such distinctive capacities and incapacities, few observers of our species on a large scale will be found to doubt: any difference of opinion merely regards the inherent and ineradicable nature of these distinctions. While some conceive them to belong to the race, its pedigree, its physical conformation—others attribute them to the operation of external influences, as country, climate, government, surrounding accidents, or historical antecedents.

\* From the "Edinburgh Review."

*Le Siècle. Le Pouvoir: Le Moniteur: Le Journal des Débats:*  
1849, 1850.

Thus, a broad line of demarcation distinguishes the Oriental from the European nations. Progress distinguishes the one; a stereotyped stationariness the other. The former rest unambitiously in the blind worship of the past; the latter draw all their inspiration from hope, and lay the scenes of their dreams of happiness in the times that are to come. The golden age of the one is the primeval Eden of their ancestors; the Paradise of the other is the future dwelling-place of their children's children. Passive and unmurmuring resignation under the evils of life is the religion of the East; indomitable and untiring energy in conflict with those evils is the virtue of the West. The Oriental acquiesces in all that is ordained; the European acquiesces in nothing that can be amended. Neither character presents a complete and perfect whole: and the philosopher may be tempted to speculate on the splendid results which would signalise the union of the two, if such an event be among the future possibilities of human destiny:—

“In dreaming of each mighty birth,  
That shall one day be born  
From marriage of the Western earth  
With nations of the Morn.”

Nor can we shut our eyes to the fact that differences, less marked indeed, but quite as real, distinguish the several European races from each other. Each has its peculiar gift—its special line of excellence, in which it is unapproachable—its special incapacity, which no experience and no effort seem able to cure. The spirit of patient, unwearying, and minute research, of profound and far-reaching speculation—the perfection of the abstract intellect—are the dowry of the Germans. But the faculty of managing successfully the rougher and homelier affairs of social life, seems to have been granted to them in far scantier measure. They are

glorious musicians—very commonplace administrators. On the theoretical science of government they think profoundly—in the actual *art* of it they have been as yet children. To the Italians, again, is assigned that fervid imagination—that keen susceptibility to all the finer influences—that intense homage to the beautiful—that pursuit of the ideal as a reality, out of which springs the perfection of the fine arts. But for some centuries back they have seemed to purchase this brilliant pre-eminence at the expense of incompetence for the practical duties and business of political life. With the most singular combination of intellectual powers among European nations, they have suffered themselves to be more misgoverned than any people except the Spaniards; and with the finest soil and climate in the world, they have long remained nearly at a stand-still in all the material elements of civilisation. Perhaps it may be this very sacrifice to the ideal which incapacitates them for the achievements of common life, where *modifications* and adaptations, rather than *creations*, are wanted—improvements of what *is*, rather than the removal of it, to make room for what ought to be. Probably, also, the pursuit and overweening appreciation of the merely beautiful are unfavourable to a certain hardness and sternness of mind, which may be essential to success in the rough work of the political arena.

The French, too, unrivalled in scientific precision, are stricken with impotence when they approach the higher regions of poetical or spiritual thought. Pre-eminent as a military people, they have signally failed in all attempts to add naval success to their other achievements. And with the thoughts of the whole people, occupied for sixty years in the search after that “abstract perfection in government” (which, as Canning remarked, is not an object of reasonable pursuit, because

it is not one of possible attainment), and with as fair a field, and as unimpeded a career, as was ever vouchsafed to any nation in Europe—they are actually at the present time no nearer than at the beginning, to the realisation of their ideal. While the English, on the other hand—loathing abstract thought, looking with suspicion or contempt on all endeavours after scientific accuracy in moral or political questions, empiric, tentative, often blundering, always unsystematic, alternately sleeping in smiling apathy, and awakening with a panic start—now straining at the smallest hardship, now swallowing the most monstrous oppression; now neglecting the growth of the most frightful evils, now arousing themselves to the most microscopic vigilance; now wretched, frantic, and remorseful, if a criminal is harshly treated, or a pauper inadequately fed; now contemplating with serene indifference the grinding misery of thousands;—nevertheless have contrived to advance with magical rapidity in the material arts of life; and to proceed, though at a far slower rate, with the remedy of public ills, and the diffusion of social welfare. Surrounded by difficulties, they succeed in maintaining their freedom unimpaired, and even confirmed; and in making almost yearly some steps—halting and uncertain as they are—towards a better and wiser government.

If we are right in these views—if no national character is complete and perfect, and equipped in an adequate measure with all capacities—it follows that, to expect from all nations success and excellence in all lines, or in the same lines, is an unreasonable demand; and to imagine that the same political garments will fit all alike, is a practical mistake of the most dangerous description. Yet recent events have shown that it is about the most widely diffused of all misapprehensions; and it is the one, of all others, into which Englishmen

are most apt to fall. We have been too much like the enthusiastic convalescent who would force upon every invalid the invaluable medicine which has cured his own malady and agreed with his own system. To our representative institutions—to our “glorious British constitution”—we gratefully ascribe (whether altogether justly we need not here discuss) our long career of prosperity, our wide empire, our high position, our unequalled amount of personal freedom, the buoyancy with which we ride out the fiercest storms, the elastic energy which carries us triumphantly through the darkest disasters. Our neighbours draw the same inference, and clamour for institutions similar to ours; and they are backed in their demand by the most ardent sympathy which the flattered vanity and the genuine benevolence of England can afford. They seize eagerly upon the magic spell; and find—alas! too late—alike to their astonishment and ours, that the magic resides, not in the spell, but in its special adaptation to the practised hand that wields it. Close observation, both of ourselves and of our imitators, may convince us that the real merit and effect of these institutions belong far less to the forms themselves than to those national qualities which enable us to use them so skilfully, to supply their deficiencies, and correct their incongruities.

We think that a little reflection will show reason for believing that, if we have succeeded in the great object of a people's existence—progress towards good—it is to be attributed far more to our national character than to our national institutions; and perhaps more to the suitability of the two to each other, than to the peculiar excellence of either;—that if these institutions have worked well, and borne rich fruit here, thanks are due less to any inherent perfection of their own than to that sterling good sense and good feeling which so incessantly, habitually, and almost unconsciously, interfere



to prevent them from working ill. We believe it may be shown, in the first place, that we have materials, in the frame-work of our society and in our national character, for the formation and management of the representative system, and of free institutions generally, such as no other people is blessed with; and, in the second place, that that system and those institutions could only bring out satisfactory results—could, in fact, only subsist at all—among a people who *need as little government* as the Americans and the English. The price which even we ourselves have paid and are still paying for the proud distinction of parliamentary government, in the shape of defective administration, expense, blunders, and neglects; and the extent to which individual wisdom and collective reasonableness and energy are hourly called in to counteract the perils and remedy the mischiefs resulting from this form of government; these are points which foreigners can never know—which Englishmen themselves are seldom fully aware of—and of the tendency of which no one can form an adequate conception, who has not watched the working of English institutions in Irish hands, and thence gained a glimpse of what in such a case would happen, were England not at hand to interpose a corrective and restraining power.

The English constitution is full of theoretical defects. It contains at least half a dozen indefensible provisions, any one of which would, at first sight, appear sufficient to vitiate all its excellences, and to bring it to a deadlock in a month. Yet not only has it continued (with some variety of form) to work for centuries; but, under it, and in spite of its manifest imperfections, Englishmen have enjoyed a greater degree of practical and sober liberty than any nation in the world. Its faults are neutralised, and its contradictions have become reconciled or hidden. Mindful that a mixed govern-

ment can exist only by compromise, we have always prevented the extreme cases of the constitution from occurring, and taken care not to strain our conflicting rights till they give way. For instance, our monarch has an absolute veto, which has not been exercised since the days of William of Orange: and which, though the unquestioned prerogative of the Crown, never is and never will again be exercised; because its exercise would practically bring the entire political machine to a stand. Our House of Commons has the power, when it differs in opinion from the Crown and the House of Peers, of stopping the supplies, and so starving them into a surrender. But the power is never exercised,—rarely even threatened or hinted at,—because the tyranny of the proceeding would be repugnant to the general feelings of the country, save in those ultimate emergencies which are never permitted to occur. The monarch, when the House of Lords thwarts his wishes, has the power of controlling its opposition within itself and reducing it to obedience by swamping it with new creations; but his subjects and himself alike shrink from such a violent enforcement of the prerogative. In like manner the House of Peers, by obstinate resistance to the will of the Commons and the Crown, may effectually stop legislation altogether; but prudential considerations have always come in aid and held them back, before they had carried this privilege too far. Thus, any one of the three constituent elements of our government may, by the theory of the constitution, tyrannise over the others: yet they never do so; or if they do, the oppression is covered by a decent and courteous veil. Nay, more; any two or three factious members of the House of Commons have the power of arresting all the business of the country, stopping the supplies, paralysing the government, and checkmating the parliament, by putting in practice their undoubted right of incessantly moving the adjournment

of the House. Yet the propriety of such a power, when exercised moderately, and its utter inadmissibility when carried to excess, are found practically to be a guarantee against both its abolition and its abuse. In the same way, the unanimity required from juries would habitually defeat the ends of justice and abet the escape of criminals, did not the common sense and mutual forbearance, characteristic of our countrymen, practically convert this unanimity into the opinion of the majority, except in the very rarest instances; so that, in reality, it only operates as a security for more careful and deliberate decision. In the Sister Island these salutary counteractions have been found wanting; and the whole history of the Irish parliament and the Irish courts of law is a practical comment, of the most convincing kind, on the great truth on which we are now dwelling:—how necessary is an approach to English steadiness and English principle to make English institutions *work*.

For the last sixty years the idolators of free institutions and of the representative system have been grievously disappointed and disgusted by observing how ill these worked in France; how deplorably they were mismanaged; and how small a measure of public good or real liberty they wrought. In the first Revolution, many of our purest English sympathisers were staggered in their adherence to the principles of constitutional freedom in consequence of what they witnessed in France. Traces of this may be found in the writings of the staunchest Whigs of the period, such as Romilly and Mackintosh. They were horror-struck at seeing what mischief might be wrought by forms of government which they had been accustomed to look up to as only instruments of good. We can all of us remember how bitter was our mortification after the second Revolution, when, under a far soberer movement, the dangers of a violent and destructive despotism appeared to be



exchanged for a scarce less damaging and discreditable corruption. And now, after a third experiment, how many real lovers of the public good are sighing for a military autocrat to educe something like order out of chaos! how few venture to hope that France can extricate herself from her present dismal and almost desperate condition, without either succumbing to a tyranny, or undergoing a fourth convulsion! Much of this disappointment might have been spared, much of this infidelity to the worship of liberty might have been avoided, had we reflected that sufficiently free institutions need certain national qualities for their success,—that they have no patent for conferring wisdom and virtue, but are simply instruments by which wisdom and virtue may work out infinite good; but which, in the hands of violence, selfishness, or folly, may be turned to immeasurable evil.

In order to bring out our views more clearly, we will endeavour succinctly to point out *first*, a few of those qualities in a people which are indispensable to the successful working of self-government, or a parliamentary government like ours; and, *secondly*, some of the unavoidable mischiefs which such a government entails even among ourselves,—mischiefs, however, which we gladly submit to as the needful price for a most precious good, and which we meet and neutralise as best we may.

The very first requisite is a sense of truth and justice, widely diffused and deeply engrained in the heart of the people. It must be borne in mind that he who takes a share in the direction of the community, is called upon to govern *others*. It is not merely his own interests that he has to consider, but the interests of his country and his fellow-citizens, even where these clash, or appear to clash, with his own. It is not only what is due to himself, but what is due to all other members of the

commonwealth, that he is under a solemn obligation to regard. Conceive what a community *that* would be of which simple selfishness, unchecked by conscience, unenlightened by clear-sighted wisdom, should be the motive impulse and the guiding star! All history has shown that real freedom can only be maintained where genuine patriotism pervades the nation,—and the very essence of patriotism is an unselfish, though a partial, love of justice. Amid a people wanting in real public spirit, the representative system must soon degenerate into a deceptive form, and may then become one of the most fearful phases and instruments of misrule. The secret history of the Irish Parliament and of the French Chambers proclaims this lesson with alarming vividness. The very safety of a nation, as well as its interest and its honour, depend upon having just men carried to the head of affairs, and maintained there; but where,—when the population has been made a prey to ignorant, greedy, tenacious self-seeking,—where is to be found the sense or the principle, either to choose such, or to tolerate their rule when chosen? A government selected from and by the people can only reflect the qualities of that people; if the mass of the nation be wise, just, and true, the rulers will be not only the embodiment, but the *élite*, the filtered essence, of that wisdom, that justice, that truth; if the mass be corrupted, grasping, and regardless of the rights of others, the concentration and aggravation of all these disqualifying elements is certain to be found, sooner or later, in the high places of the state.

The entire absence of a due regard for the rights of others—almost of a perception that such rights exist—which has been manifested by nearly all classes in France, both during and since the convulsion of 1848, will go far to illustrate our meaning. Liberty—equality—fraternity—were the watchwords of the last revolu-

tion, as of the first. The Provisional Government announced them at its first sitting in the Hôtel de Ville, and all their decrees were headed with the magical syllables. Every man was to have a share, an equal share, in the choice of rulers and the decision of the form of government. Nothing could be fairer than the promise; and, if the old system of things was to be considered entirely swept away, nothing could be juster than the principle. But it soon appeared that neither the Provisional Government nor their supporters had any idea of adhering to it. Their profession, as well as their duty, clearly was, to ascertain as soon as might be, by universal suffrage, the real wishes of the country on the nature of their government, and then promptly and unobtrusively to carry them into effect. But it early became evident that nothing could be further from their thoughts than either to obey these wishes when ascertained, or even to wait for their expression. They proclaimed a republic at once; alike ignorant and careless whether France, when consulted, would not prefer a monarchy or an empire. They issued decrees after decrees with greater recklessness, greater indifference to the feelings, greater contempt for the rights and possessions of their fellow-citizens, than any autocrat in Asia would have dared to manifest. They plundered alike the rich and the poor; they abolished titles, and robbed the savings' bank. They did not even profess to allow the French nation (out of Paris) freedom or fair play in the exercise of the universal suffrage they had just proclaimed. They sent out emissaries to the provinces with authority to displace any functionaries who held opinions adverse to the governing *clique* at Paris, and to use every means to secure the election of such representatives, and such only, as should be thorough republicans. Louis Philippe, among all his oppressions, never ventured upon any attack on the

freedom of suffrage half so barefaced. The government, so far from wishing fairly to ascertain the will of the whole nation, evidently feared the expression of that will, and were anxious to control it. Most of the active parties in the Parisian movement shared this feeling; they fancied (right or wrong) that the majority of the French nation were not on their side,—were not favourable to republican institutions; and they were resolved—so ill had they learned the first principles of liberty—that the voice of the majority should be silenced or coerced. When the regiments of the National Guard assembled to choose their officers, the pledge exacted from the candidates was this:—"that in the event of the new convention declaring against a republic, they would march against them and put them down!" What was this, but to make public profession of military despotism? What was this, but a declaration on the part of certain classes of the population of Paris,—“If the votes of the great majority of French citizens, honestly ascertained, should decide against our views, we will unscrupulously trample upon that majority, and carry out our views by force?” Accordingly, when the convention met, the members were compelled to appear upon the balcony in presence of the armed mob of the metropolis, and cry *Vive la République*, without having even a decent interval allowed them for going through the form of a deliberation. How *could* free institutions work among a people who showed themselves so utterly insensible to the commonest dictates of justice between man and man?

The same regardlessness of the rights of others, thus early pronounced by the Provisional Government and the National Guard, pervaded every class, and every individual, both in Paris and the other great towns. No one had the slightest scruple about imposing his

own will upon others by force. In all discussions, the minority were ready to appeal to arms. If out-voted, they would fight for it. However small the number who held their opinions, however conscious they were that the vast mass of the nation was opposed to them, they still held themselves entitled to compel obedience to their wishes. Every man maintained his right to coerce the whole nation. Every vote of the Assembly was a signal for some party or other who were offended at it, to "descend into the streets," as the phrase was. Hence the six months succeeding February, witnessed a scarcely interrupted succession of actual or attempted *émeutes*. How could a representative system flourish and bear fruit, when the very foundation on which it rests,—submission to the decision of the electors, unequivocally and constitutionally expressed,—was not merely overlooked or overborne, but openly denied and scouted?

A similar spirit has animated the course pursued by all parties even to the date at which we write. The President and the Assembly preserve an attitude of mutual and indecorous hostility, instead of mutual forbearance and respect. The malcontent minority rail at the triumphant majority, *i. e.* the Assembly; and the Assembly, forgetting that angry criticism is the inalienable right of the minority, endeavours to punish and gag the press. The defeated Socialists seem incessantly occupied with plots against the government, and the alarmed authorities retaliate by a new electoral law which disfranchises half the constituency of France. Encroachment is retorted by encroachment; and tyranny on the one side, and conspiracy on the other, indicate too plainly how little either party understand the duties of citizens or the rights of man. "Partout," says M. Guizot, "les libertés individuelles des citoyens seules en présence de la volonté unique de la majorité numé-

rique de la nation. Partout le principe du despotisme en face du droit de l'insurrection !”

Again, a general regard for truth is the bond, the tacit postulate, which lies at the very root of every social relation. In all the daily and hourly transactions of life, we assume that a man will do what he swears to do, and has done what he affirms that he has done. We could not get on without this assumption; all society would be brought to a dead-lock in a single day, were we compelled to forego it. No concerns, least of all those in which the citizens take a direct share, as in the administration of justice or in municipal government, could be carried on, were this postulate once proved and felt to be a false one. The effect upon the operation of free institutions, of an habitual disregard of the obligations of truth and justice, is well illustrated by the working of trial by jury in Ireland in a certain class of cases in recent times.

This institution is based upon the assumption that witnesses will give true evidence, and that jurymen will a true verdict find according to the evidence,—both parties swearing that they will do so. If this assumption be correct, trial by jury is the most invaluable of free institutions; if the assumption be false, it is of all institutions the most noxious and treacherous. Where the assumption is correct, trial by jury is the safeguard of liberty and the protection of the community; where the assumption is incorrect, then trial by jury is the shield of the wrong-doer, the peril of the good citizen—“a delusion, a mockery, and a snare;”—it becomes an institution, not for discovering, but for concealing truth—not for administering, but for evading justice—for compromising, dishonouring, and endangering society. Now the assumption has long been *not* correct in Ireland; and it is notorious that it has not been so. In that country it is well known that where party feeling,



religious hostility, or class sympathies intervene, neither the statement of a witness, nor the oath of jurymen, can be relied on. One instance will suffice. The statement was Mr. O'Connell's, and was made, we believe, in the House of Commons. "On one occasion," said the great agitator, "I was counsel for a man on his trial for murder. I called only one witness for the defence; but that one, anywhere save in Ireland, would have been sufficient. *I put the murdered man into the witness-box, to prove that he was still alive. No question was raised as to his identity, but my client was found guilty.*"\* The state trials in Ireland in 1848 brought out the same truth with the most painful and instructive clearness. Three men were severally put on their trial for treason and sedition. About their guilt there was not a doubt: it was notorious and avowed. They did not even plead that they had not committed treason; they simply argued, after the pattern of the French *émeutiers*, that they had a right to commit it. Yet so doubtful was the decision of an Irish jury felt to be, that the whole struggle took place, not on the question as to the value or relevancy of the evidence, but *on the striking of the panel*. In the two first cases the prisoners escaped, because unanimity was required, and two of the jurymen were partisans: in the third case a conviction was obtained, because the prisoner chanced to have no friends in the jury-box. So completely was this acknowledged, that in all the angry discussions which subsequently took place, the only question argued on either side turned on the constitution of the jury;—for on the great issue, that of guilt or innocence, there

\* Mr. Lover, in his "Rory O'More," mentions a similar instance. Mr. Foster ("Letters on Ireland," p. 409.) states, having had the curiosity to count, that in 1000 instances the statements made before Lord Devon's commission *on oath*, have been flatly contradicted *on oath*.



was no difference of opinion. The complaint of the seditious was that their virtual accomplices were excluded from the jury-box: the defence of the authorities was, that this was indispensable in order to obtain an honest verdict. Both parties were right. But how can trial by jury work in a country where oaths are of so little cogency, and where party feeling is so universal, so vehement, and so unscrupulous, that, to speak plainly, a prisoner's only choice often lies between a jury of antagonists or a jury of partisans?

The second national requisite for the successful working of self-government, is an habitual respect for established law. Before a people can be trusted either to make the laws, or to enforce them, they must have learned the first great lesson of yielding them a cheerful and reverential obedience. Without the wide diffusion of this virtue through all ranks, the law can have no permanence, the administrators of the law no authority. Without this, what hold could judges and officers have over the people, by whom they were appointed, by whom they were removable, and from the will of whom they derived their mission to control that will? Where the great majority of the nation venerate and uphold the law, the judge and the sheriff act against the malefactors and the turbulent with the whole power of the community; where it is otherwise, their task is the hopeless one of casting out Satan by Satan's agency. Conceive the consequences in Ireland, were legislators, judges, and officers the direct creatures of the people's choice! Who would dare to make a just law, or enforce a stringent one? In America, the great body of the people still retains much of their ancestral reverence for the laws—what Carlyle calls “an inveterate and inborn reverence for the constable's staff,”—and a wholesome education is contending manfully in the same direction.

Yet even there, we see occasionally alarming indications of the difficulties which are felt by popularly elected officers, in cases where the law-makers and the law-breakers are identical. In France, the despotic and anomalous power of the police, to which Frenchmen have been long accustomed to submit, and the extensive ramifications of the bureaucratic system, which scarcely leaves full freedom of action in any of the ordinary transactions of life, have hitherto, in some degree, replaced that respect for law which is so sadly wanting there; but as these wear out, or are cast off, the consequences cannot fail to develop themselves.

The French have a significant phrase in common use, *le droit d'insurrection*—the right of revolt. The expression, at least the ordinary use of it, speaks volumes. The right of rising in arms against the government is with them one of the most precious of the "rights of man,"—a right, too, which they take care shall not be lost *non utendo*—a right not, as with us, kept in the background, in secrecy and silence, disused and forgotten till oppression has driven wise men mad, but kept bright and burnished as a daily weapon, constantly flourished in the face of rulers, and ready to be acted upon on the most trivial occasions. To repeat a simile which has become a common-place with us,—what in England is considered the extreme medicine of the constitution, is made in France its daily bread. In the code of French constitutional law, every man whom the rulers may have injured or displeased—every man who deems any decisions of the Chamber unpatriotic or unwise—every man who thinks the proceedings of the government oppressive, or its form impolitic,—has the sacred and inalienable right of insurrection to fall back upon, and may at once set up the standard of revolt, and try what fiery and foolish spirits are rash enough to join him. An Englishman

would shrink back from any similar enterprise, as being black with the guilt, and terrible with the penalties, of treason. A Frenchman has no such feeling: with him it is no question of right or wrong, but simply of the chance of failure or success. The right of "cashiering" his rulers, if they will not do his bidding—if they persist in doing the bidding of the great mass of his countrymen instead—he considers to be as indisputably and inherently vested in him as the right of choosing his representative, and one to be exercised with almost as little consideration. Mr. Burke thus describes our very different English feeling on this matter:—"The question of dethroning, or, if these gentlemen like the phrase better, 'cashiering' kings, will always be, as it has always been, an extraordinary question of state, and wholly out of the law,—a question (like all other questions of state) of dispositions, and of means, and of probable consequences, rather than of positive rights. As it was not made for common abuses, so it is not to be agitated by common minds. The speculative line of demarcation, where obedience ought to end, and resistance must begin, is faint, obscure, and not easily definable. It is not a single act, or a single event, which determines it. Government must be abused and deranged indeed before it can be thought of; and the prospect of the future must be as bad as the experience of the past. When things are in that lamentable condition, the nature of the disease is to indicate the remedy to those whom nature has qualified to administer in extremities this critical, ambiguous, bitter potion to a distempered state. Times, and occasions, and provocations, will teach their own lesson. The wise will determine from the gravity of the case; the irritable, from sensibility to oppression; the high-minded, from disdain and indignation at abusive power in unworthy

hands; the bold and the brave, from the love of honourable danger in a generous cause: but, with or without right, a revolution will always be the very last resource of the thinking and the good."

A further illustration may be gathered from comparing the whole tone of proceedings in state trials for libel, treason, and sedition, in France and in England. The contrast is startling and instructive. In England the sole questions asked are, "What is the law? and has the accused violated that law?" To these questions all parties—judge, prosecutor, and prisoner—address themselves, and confine themselves. Neither the counsel for the crown, nor, generally, the counsel for the prisoner, makes any appeal to the political predilections of the jury: they are supposed to bring no such predilections into court. The judge coldly explains the law; the jury impartially investigate the fact. If the prisoner is condemned, it is because it has been made clear that he knowingly broke the law: no other inquiry is entered into. If he escapes, it is either because he is able to prove his innocence,—or, as is more frequently the case, the possibility of his innocence,—or because our almost superstitious reverence for law allows him to avail himself of some loophole which its weary technicalities afford. In France, the prosecutor blazons the iniquity of the doctrines broached by the accused, or the seditious views he is known to entertain; and the accused replies, seldom attempting to prove that he did not publish the libel, or was not concerned in the *émeute*, but pleading boldly his *droit d'insurrection*, defending at great length the soundness of his political opinions, and appealing to the first principles of society, the laws of nature, and the rights of man. We remember to have read an account of one of these trials, in which the prisoners in their defence left wholly on one side the question of their guilt or in-

nocence, and confined themselves to a proof of *la supériorité de leurs principes* !

This want of respect for established law is far more to be deplored than wondered at. How, indeed, should the French possess it? Since the first Revolution, sixty years ago, swept away all the laws and institutions which were venerable and powerful from the strength of centuries, none of those by which they were replaced have lasted long enough to acquire any firm hold upon the popular mind, or fairly to take root in the habits and affections of the nation. Every institution has been liable to be changed long before it had time to gain a prescriptive title to respect; every law has stood by its own strength alone; and France has found itself in the pitiable, anchorless, rudderless situation of a nation without antecedents. It is probable that a least a century of stable government must intervene before Frenchmen can look upon their national laws with any of the same feelings, with which an Englishman bows to those which are hallowed to his mind by their connection with the past and the antiquity of some eight hundred years.

One of the most essential conditions of success in self-government, in nations as in individuals, is a certain sobriety of character. They must have some capacity of independent thought, some power of resisting the influence of mere oratory, of withstanding the contagion of sympathy with numbers, of turning a deaf ear to high-sounding but unmeaning watchwords. Now, to be able to do all this implies either unusual natural solidity of intellect, or a degree of mental cultivation hitherto rarely to be found in the body of the people. It is curious, as well as instructive, to observe how much more readily the populace of most countries, France and Ireland more especially, can be fired by grand ideas, and fine, though wild, conceptions, than

by the ablest appeal to their reason or even to their material interests. They turn with disgust or incredulity from the wise and far-sighted political economist, and drink in with eager ears the exciting rhapsodies of the poet. "Gain but their ear (it has been said), and you will rarely find them fail in their comprehension of an abstract notion; whereas they are generally incapable of penetrating into any points of detail. Talk to the starving people of plans, the best devised and wisest, for giving them bread to eat; try to induce them to see the positive correctness of your calculations; and they will either leave you to discourse to the winds or will stone you to death, after accusing you of wishing to take advantage of the public distress. But entertain them with declamations about glory, honour, charity, and they will forget their wants in child-like admiration." Now, there is much that is beautiful, much even that is hopeful, in this greater aptitude for the entertainment of high and glowing images than of material and interested considerations, in this keener susceptibility of the passions than the appetites; but it is a feature in the popular mind which does not promise well for the success of free institutions at the time, nor indicate a high capacity for self-government. It is a peculiarity which makes a people the easy victims of demagogues, the ready instruments of every fanatic orator, the prey of every soured or hungry patriot. It is interesting to see the French artisan, scarcely able by the strictest frugality and the hardest toil to maintain his family, yet listening with eager aspect, swelling attitude, and flashing eyes, to the haranguer. And what says the harangue? It speaks to him of the unblemished honours of the flag of France, ends every sentence with *la gloire et la patrie*, and strives by an appeal to historic memories to arouse his ancestral antipathy to England. Under the excite-

ment not only is poverty forgotten, but joyfully exchanged for actual starvation, so that some imagined insult offered to the glory of his country may be avenged. It is interesting to see the Irishman, with all his habitual want of order and self-control, touched, and subdued, and carried away captive by Father Mathew. His picturesque and imaginative temperament was so wrought upon, as to enable him to renounce his favourite vice, and exercise a forbearance which no regard to his own interests could ever force upon him. But in both these spectacles, if there is much to interest, there is also much to alarm. They point to a weakness in the national mind,—a weakness which, beyond doubt, has its bright and serviceable side, but still a weakness which has been found to seriously impair their fitness for the management of their own affairs,—a weakness which places them at the mercy of any eloquent misleader,—a weakness which is at least as easily swayed to evil as to good. This infirmity is one which the demagogues of both countries have understood thoroughly, and have worked most mercilessly for their own bad ends; which in France, indeed, Lamartine once turned to temporary good, but which in Ireland O'Connell turned—also with one great exception—to incessant and incalculable mischief.

Further. It is of the last moment that all who are, or are likely to be, called to administer the affairs of a free state, should be deeply imbued with the statesman-like virtues of modesty and caution, and should act under a profound sense of their personal responsibility. It is an awful thing to undertake the government of a great country; and no man can be any way worthy of that high calling who does not from his inmost soul feel it to be so. When we reflect upon the fearful consequences, both to the lives, the material interests, and the



moral well-being of thousands, which may ensue from a hasty word, an erroneous judgment, a temporary carelessness, or lapse of diligence; when we remember that every action of a statesman is pregnant with results which may last for generations after he is gathered to his fathers; that his decisions may, and probably must, affect for good or ill the destinies of future times; that peace or war, crime or virtue, prosperity or adversity, the honour or dishonour of his country, the right or wrong, wise or unwise solution of some of the mightiest problems in the progress of humanity, depend upon the course he may pursue at those critical moments which to ordinary men occur but rarely, but which crowd the daily life of a statesman; the marvel is that men should be forthcoming bold enough to venture on such a task. Now, among public men in England this sense of responsibility is in general adequately felt. It affords an honourable (and in most cases we believe a true) explanation of that singular discrepancy between public men when in and when out of office, — that inconsistency between the promise and the performance, — between what the leader of the opposition urges the minister to do, and what the same leader, when minister himself, actually does, — which is so commonly attributed to less reputable motives. The independent member may speculate and criticise at his ease; may see, as he thinks, clearly, and with an undoubting and imperious conviction, what course on this or that question ought to be pursued; may feel so unboundedly confident in the soundness of his views, that he cannot comprehend or pardon the inability of ministers to see as he sees, and to act as he would wish; but as soon as the overwhelming responsibilities of office are his own, — as soon as he finds no obstacle to the carrying out of his plans except such as may arise from the sense that he does so at the risk of his country's welfare and his own

reputation, — he is seized with a strange diffidence, a new-born modesty, a mistrust of his own judgment which he never felt before ; he re-examines, he hesitates, he delays ; he brings to bear upon the investigation all the new light which official knowledge has revealed to him ; and finds at last that he scruples to do himself what he had not scrupled to insist upon before. So deep-rooted is this sense of responsibility with our countrymen, that whatever parties a crisis of popular feeling might carry into power, we should have comparatively little dread of rash, and no dread of corrupt, conduct on their part : we scarcely know the public man who, when his country's destinies were committed to his charge, *could* for a moment dream of acting otherwise than with scrupulous integrity, and to the best of his utmost diligence and most cautious judgment, — at all events till the dulness of daily custom had laid his self-vigilance asleep. We are convinced that, were Lord Stanhope and Mr. D'Israeli to be borne into office by some grotesque freak of fortune, even they would become sobered as by magic, and would astonish all beholders, not by their vagaries, but by their steadiness and discretion.

Now, of this wholesome sense of awful responsibility, we see no indications among public men in France. Dumont says, in his "Recollections of Mirabeau," "I have sometimes thought that if you were to stop a hundred men indiscriminately in the streets of Paris and London, and propose to each to undertake the government, ninety-nine of the Londoners would refuse and ninety-nine of the Parisians would accept." In fact we find that it is only one or two of the more experienced *habitués* of office who in France ever seem to feel any hesitation. Ordinary deputies, military men, journalists, men of science, accept, with a *naïve* and simple courage, posts for which, except that courage, they possess no

single qualification. But this is not the worst ; they never hesitate, at their country's risk and cost, to carry out their own favourite schemes to an experiment ; in fact, they often seem to value office mainly for that purpose, and to regard their country chiefly as the *corpus vile* on which the experiment is to be made. Diffidence — filial respect for their native land — are sentiments, apparently, alike unknown. To make way for their cherished theories, they relentlessly sweep out of sight the whole past, and never appear to contemplate either the possibility of failure, or the weight of parricidal guilt which failure will cast upon them. Like the daughters of Pelias, they unscrupulously "hack their aged parent in pieces, and put him into the kettle of magicians, in hopes that by their poisonous weeds and wild incantations, they may regenerate the paternal constitution, and renovate their father's life."

Few men ever lived so well entitled as Burke to try their hand at constructing a theoretical constitution and at setting it to work. But, though the first of political philosophers, he was to the last unable to conceive "how any man can have brought himself to that pitch of presumption, to consider his country as nothing but *carte-blanche*, upon which he may scribble whatever he pleases." This point, however, has been attained by many of the most active politicians of France. The events of 1848 too clearly showed it. The history of the strange proceedings in February of that year, and of Lamartine's part in them, as detailed by him in his history of the late revolution, displays more strikingly than any words of ours could do how utterly the portion of patriotism which consists in reverence for country, is absent from the thoughts of even the principal performer on that occasion. Lamartine relates, that on reaching the Chamber of Deputies on the morning of the 24th February, he was accosted and led into a

private room by seven or eight individuals, chiefly journalists, who addressed him in the extraordinary terms which we formerly quoted : —

“ L’heure presse ; les événemens sont suspendus sur l’inconnu ; nous sommes républicains ; nos convictions, nos pensées, nos vies, sont dévouées à la république. . . . Nous ne l’abandonnerons jamais ; mais nous pouvons l’ajourner et la suspendre devant les intérêts supérieurs à nos yeux à la république même, les intérêts de la patrie. La France est elle mûre pour cette forme de gouvernement ? l’accepterait-elle sans résistance ? . . . Voilà l’état de nos esprits, voilà nos scrupules ; résolvons-les. Nous ne vous connaissons pas, nous ne vous flattons pas, mais nous vous estimons. Le peuple invoque votre nom. Il a confiance en vous ; vous êtes à nos yeux l’homme de la circonstance. Ce que vous direz sera dit. Ce que vous voudrez sera fait. Le règne de Louis Philippe est fini ; aucune réconciliation n’est possible entre lui et nous. Mais une continuation de royauté temporaire sous le nom d’un enfant, sous la main foible d’une femme, et sous la direction d’un ministre populaire, mandataire du peuple, cher aux républicains, peut-elle clore la crise ? . . . Voulez-vous être ce ministre ? . . . Le parti-républicain se donne authentiquement à vous par nos voix. Nous sommes prêts à prendre l’engagement formel de vous porter au pouvoir par la main désormais invincible de la révolution qui gronde à ces portes, de vous y soutenir, de vous y perpétuer. . . . Votre cause sera la nôtre.”

Lamartine asked *five minutes* for reflection ; and then, without a shadow of diffidence or compunction, decided in favour of a republic, — and within six hours was accordingly installed, as the head of a Provisional Government, at the Hôtel de Ville.

Now, consider well the salient points of this strange narrative. While Louis Philippe still reigns at the Tuilleries, — while the city is in tumult, and occasional shots are heard, — while the new ministers are insanely withdrawing the troops under the idea that the people will be satisfied with the concessions of the monarch

and the appointment of a reforming administration, half a dozen journalists accost an influential deputy, inform him that the old government is at an end, that the monarch is, or shall be, deposed,—offer him the helm of state, as being in their gift, and crown the monstrous proceeding by *giving him five minutes* to decide whether the future government of France shall be a republic, or a constitutional monarchy under the Count of Paris! Lamartine expresses no surprise,—he is not shocked at the astounding audacity of the proposal,—he is not terrified by the face-to-face view of conspiracy and treason,—he does not disclaim the influence which is ascribed to him,—he does not shrink from the tremendous magnitude of the question submitted to his decision; but, “covering his face with his hands, and leaning his elbows on the table,” he rapidly runs over the arguments on both sides, for and against, and then—in less time than an English banker would take to decide upon the acceptance of a dubious bill, or a merchant to decide upon a purchase or a sale of stock—he raises his head, and with the confident dogmatism of an oracle, pronounces the fiat which expels the House of Orleans from France, and changes at once a dynasty and a constitution! We question whether all history can produce a parallel instance of sublime assurance.

Some nations need, and are accustomed to, a much greater amount of government than others. In that case, their habits, and the necessities generated by those habits, present serious obstacles to the satisfactory working of a more popular organisation. A people reared in that condition of swathed and bandaged helplessness which bureaucracy inevitably engenders, has a long and difficult track to traverse, before it is fitted either to use free institutions, or to maintain them. A business-like training in the school of municipal

self-government would seem to be an indispensable preparative for managing the affairs of a republic. In America and in England it is surprising how little government we require; and how much of that little we supply to ourselves through the instrumentality of local administration. Much of our taxation, and many of our public works, we settle at parochial or county meetings. We may pass year after year, without ever becoming conscious of any direct action of government upon us. So rarely does it step in to affect officially the ordinary life of an Englishman, either to guide or to control, that he may pass through his whole career without becoming cognisant of its existence, except through the periodical demands of the tax-gatherer. He is accustomed to guide himself, to decide for himself, to arrange for himself in all the transactions of the world, without the interference or consultation of any higher power. But in France and Austria, and throughout the Continent generally, the case is as much the reverse of this as possible. In almost every proceeding and event of private life, the action of government is felt,—peremptory and immediate. The public functionaries are omnipresent, omniscient, and almost omnipotent. In the choice of a profession, in the conduct of a business, in contracting a marriage, in making a will, the central authority interferes to direct, to license, to sanction, to prohibit. The Frenchman and the Austrian experiences, endures, and therefore perhaps by this time needs, twenty times as much government as the Englishman or the American. Hence, free institutions bestow upon him, not personal liberty, but merely the power of selecting the particular set of busy-bodies who shall fetter that liberty. His discontent remains the same under all changes; for he feels himself little, if at all, more free under the republic than under the monarchy,—the heavy and irritating



tyranny of the bureaucracy existing equally under both. He is as much governed by other people as he was before, and left as little to the government of himself; and feeling this, as Carlyle would call it, "inarticulately," he is as little satisfied with the idol he has set up as with that he has thrown down.

Where the functions of the ruling powers are limited to the decision of peace or war, the maintenance of order, and the execution of settled laws, the men who are to execute these functions may be chosen and changed by the popular will more or less wisely, more or less frequently and rashly, yet without any very serious consequences in ordinary times. But when these functions are extended over every department and almost every action of social life; when the rulers undertake to dictate to every man what he shall do, and when and how he shall do it; when all those local and parochial arrangements, which we make for ourselves and among ourselves, are settled at the tedious discretion of a central power, it is clear that a class of persons with wholly different qualities and powers are needed: you then require men specially trained and long habituated to the business of administration, independent of the dislike of those whom they are to drill and lead, and not liable to be removed through popular caprice and replaced by inexperienced successors. It seems almost a truism to say, that the less government a people require, the fitter are they for governing themselves; and that the more independent they are of external guidance and control, the greater the chance of popular institutions succeeding among them.

It now remains to point out a few of the items that enter into the price which we find ourselves called upon to pay for the blessing of a popular parliamentary government,—even in this country, where our suffrage

is still so limited, and our aristocracy still so powerful;—a price which would probably be far heavier elsewhere.

The first great disadvantage inherent in representative government, where the basis of the representation is at all extended, is this;—it brings to the head of affairs not necessarily the wisest statesmen nor the ablest administrators, but simply the most effective speakers and the most popular leaders. In a country,—where the body of the people are so much in the habit, and cling so much to the privilege, of expressing their opinions in public meetings, and where, periodically, the candidates for their suffrages address them from the hustings,—rhetorical powers will of course be in the greatest demand, and cannot fail to command for their possessor a success and a position in public estimation out of all proportion to their real value. In a representative assembly, too, where all the measures of government and all the interests of the nation are topics of daily *vivâ voce* discussion,—promptitude and vigour in debate, the “art of dressing up statements for the House,” readiness of speech, quick perception of the fallacies of an opponent, practised skill in concealing one’s own, are the qualities which raise a senator to eminence. It is these endowments, far more than profound views or administrative ability, which give the leadership in popular assemblies; and it is from among the leaders that, by constitutional etiquette, if not of constitutional necessity, the ministers of state are chosen. Such men cannot, it is felt, be passed over in the distribution of offices, whatever may be the idea formed of their official capacity. So large an aristocratic element still lingers in our constitution (long may it linger!) that mere eloquence, or brilliant debating skill, will not often alone give the leadership of a party in England; but it is even here a main step,

and elsewhere must become *the* main step to it; and the position is universally recognised as constituting in itself a title to the high places of a new administration. The men who occupy the front rank as debaters in the House of Commons, or in the French Chambers, feel that they have a prescriptive right to the chief offices of state whenever their party comes into power; with perhaps this difference, that in England it is *speaking*, and in France *writing*, which confers this special distinction. Now it is evident, and is daily proved, that lucid statement, powerful rapid argument, eloquent declamation, skilful sarcasm, fierce invective,—all the elements which go to make up the mighty orator,—not only differ widely from, but are seldom lodged in the same mind with, those which concur to form a sagacious statesman, viz. sobriety of view, tenacity of purpose, comprehensiveness of vision, patience in inquiry, wisdom which learns from the past, prophetic insight which can discern the direction of the future. It is probable that these endowments are found more frequently, and in richer measure, among those who speak seldom and who speak ill, than among the more prominent and brilliant debaters. It is possible that the chief, to whom the task of forming an administration is intrusted, may be fully aware of this fact,—may distrust the salient brilliancy, and recognise the value of the hidden gem; but he must succumb to the necessities which representative government imposes. Even while we write, the evil which we are pointing out forms one of the chief embarrassments of the Protectionist party, when speculating on the prospect of their return to office. The position occupied by Mr. Disraeli, long their most pointed and striking speaker, and latterly their recognised leader in the Lower House, unquestionably singles him out as entitled to one of the principal secretaryships of state in the event

of a Protectionist administration. Lord Stanley is the last man who with any grace could deny the validity of the claim according to etiquette and custom; and Mr. Disraeli is not a man to waive it. Yet so universally, even among those who most admire his talents, is his incapacity for such a responsible situation felt and acknowledged, that few prime ministers would dare to place him in it. The danger of appointing him would be even greater than the danger of omitting him; and either difficulty is great enough to render the formation of a Protectionist ministry almost impossible.\*

In England, the mischiefs arising from the cause we have here indicated, are kept in check by our national esteem for solid character; also by the opportunity which the work of parliament offers to men of general ability for proving their several powers, independently of mere oratory, and of acquiring a sufficient facility of speech for the transaction of ordinary business. But it is evident that the more excitable the people, the more extensive and dangerous this evil. Among nations so susceptible to eloquence as the Irish and the French, men like O'Connell and Lamartine, though possessed of no particular qualification, and with almost every disqualification, for the government of others, might acquire a degree of influence, which could not fail to be attended with the most fatal consequences.

It would seem to be the tendency of all nations in the enjoyment of free institutions, more and more to supersede the original functions of their legislatures, and to carry on in society at large, by popular meetings, or through the medium of the press, those political discus-

\* Sheridan and O'Connell may be specified as recent examples of distinguished debaters in the House of Commons, and in one sense undoubted leaders, whom yet it would have been fatal to appoint to influential offices.

sions for which the Representative Assembly is the recognised arena. The effect of this is to approximate the Legislative Chambers to a sort of *lits de justice*, for the registration of the popular decrees. Whether this be or be not an evil, is not here the question: the tendency is clearly observable in England as well as in America and France. The same cause operates to reduce ministers from the rank of originating, initiating, and really *ruling* statesmen, to that of mere executors of the popular will. The class of qualifications we require from them is thus materially changed; administrative ability is more specially needed than a capacity even for philosophic legislation; and as there is now no place or little opening for commanding statesmen, it becomes more important that we should have able administrators—men who can carry out with skill and judgment the recorded decisions of the nation.

Another of the drawbacks inherent in popular government is that the turmoil, tumult, and contention it involves, deter men of thoughtful minds, peaceful tempers, and retired habits from coming forward to bear their part in it. The more popular the system, the pressure of this objection becomes more sensibly felt. Now, the object of every nation is, or should be, to call to its councils and place at the head of its affairs the ablest and most virtuous of its citizens. That form of constitution which could show that it best secured this end, would go far towards showing that it was itself the best. Now, the honest and deeply reflective man, whose views of the true interests of a nation are soundest and most comprehensive, will often be found of a character which unfits him for conciliating the popular voice, and inspires in him a distaste for public struggles. The same habits of patient and quiet thought which have guided him to wisdom, indispose him to carry that wisdom to a noisy and contentious market. The pro-

found and subtle understanding which is an invaluable assistant at the Council Board, is commonly accompanied with a refined and fastidious taste which shrinks from the contest with reluctant colleagues, angry opponents, or an unappreciating and coarse constituency. Thus we find that in democracies, and more or less in all governments which approach that form, the most useful men are often shut out from public life. That they allow themselves to be so, is no doubt partly a weakness and a dereliction of duty on their side; but when the highest kind of wisdom is likely to be overlooked, and their duties are made irksome to the wise and good, the public will have to bear by far the greatest share both of the penalty and blame. It is an ill-omen for a nation, that calm, delicate, and philosophical minds should abjure her service, and retire into privacy. The mischief is already perceptible in England, notwithstanding the limitation of our suffrage, the variety of our constituencies, and the generally correct and gentlemanly spirit of our popular assembly. But in France it is seriously felt; and in America it has long been a source of regret and alarm to her most intelligent sons.

Thirdly,—representative government prevents our chief officers of state from regarding merit in the distribution of their appointments as much, or as exclusively, as the interest of the country demands, and as we believe they themselves would wish. The applicants for every vacant office are innumerable; and their respective claims are supported by influential parties whose alliance, from public motives, must be rivetted, whose hostility must not be risked, or to whom a debt of gratitude is owing for former services. The distribution of patronage is, and we fear must inevitably be, materially affected by a view to the purchase of parliamentary support. Paley in his day shocked the more moral sections of the public by broadly stating the extent, in which influence



had succeeded to prerogative: and in itself this is unquestionably an evil and a danger. But we do not mention it as a reproach to any set of ministers, when kept within due bounds. It is to be regarded rather as one of the inherent defects in a parliamentary system,—as part of the price which we pay for representative institutions,—a price which the sense and virtue of our statesmen, aided by the watchfulness of the people, it may be hoped, will continue to prevent from becoming too exorbitant. Indeed, a marked improvement in this respect has taken place in England within the last few years. Still the danger remains one which only a generally high tone of public morality can keep at bay; and it is one to which France is more especially exposed from the immense number of places at the disposal of the government,—we have seen it put at nearly 600,000,—and the universal spirit of place-hunting, stimulated, though not generated, under the late dynasty. The spirit is of older date. Madame de Stael bears witness to it under the empire.

Under a parliamentary government, an inordinate amount of the time and strength of our statesmen is wasted in parrying attacks on themselves and their measures: days and hours that ought to be devoted to the silent and undisturbed study of the country's wants, are habitually consumed in meeting the assaults of implacable and sleepless adversaries; and energies that should be spent in the actual work of administration, are frittered away in the far more harassing task of personal defence. This is a sore and a growing evil, and one under which the public service suffers most deplorably. Any senator, whom hostile feeling, love of notoriety, or genuine though restless patriotism, prompts to bring charges of partiality, malversation, or injudicious conduct against a minister, may occupy the time of the House and the country in the investigation of charges

which often turn out frivolous or groundless; and the minister is called away from his appropriate duties—already far too heavy for his strength—to rake up the ashes of long-forgotten transactions, and prepare and collect documents needed for his justification, but useless for any other purpose. We have seen many instances of this in our days,—some indefensible enough of very recent date. It is well, no doubt, that all public measures, especially such as are to be embodied into laws, should undergo the ordeal of the severest and most searching criticism; it is well too that all public men should feel that they are acting in the light of day, and before an audience, by whom their characters will be considered public property, and no lapse or failing be permitted to pass with impunity;—but in these points, as in so many others, the immoderate use of a valuable privilege may be a serious drawback on its value,—so much so, that the price paid for it at last may depopularise and discredit what ought to be the grand censorial office of a House of Commons. Popular bodies will always want reminding more or less of the celebrated protest of their most illustrious member to his constituents at Bristol: “I must beg leave just to hint to you, that we may suffer very great detriment by being open to every talker. It is not to be imagined how much service is lost from spirits full of activity and full of energy, who are pressing to great and capital objects, when you oblige them to be continually looking back. Whilst they are defending one service, they defraud you of a hundred. Applaud us when we run; console us when we fall; cheer us when we recover; but let us pass on—for God’s sake, let us pass on.”

But this is not the only evil arising from the same cause. The constant, pervading recollection that they have to run the gauntlet betwixt ranks of hostile critics, almost inevitably compels ministers to frame

their measures with a view to the ordeal through which they will have to pass, rather than with a sole reference to the public good. They construct, not the best they are capable of, but the most passable. Statesmen under an autocratic government are at liberty to bring forward such enactments as diligent inquiry and practised sagacity satisfy them will be most conducive to the public weal: they can disregard the opposition or the doubts of those less informed or less far-sighted than themselves, and can trust to time to vindicate the wisdom of their views. But statesmen under a representative system are unable thus to appeal from the present to the future: they can pass no measures for which they cannot make out a case clear and satisfactory to the public at the moment: their projects must be plausible, as well as sound,—they must *seem*, as well as be, wise and expedient,—and often the reality must be sacrificed to the seeming. Here, again, the extent of the mischief will be measured by the degree to which the democratic element prevails in the assembly; since that will probably be the measure of the degree in which the wisdom of the trained statesman surpasses the wisdom of the legislative many.

It will be readily believed that we have been led to dwell upon the difficulties and drawbacks inherent in the working of free institutions with no idea of disparaging them, or casting doubts upon their value; but in order to warn those nations which are new to them, and those which are striving after them, that, when they have won them, their work is not ended, often indeed only half begun; that these institutions are not unmixed blessings, nor self-acting charms; that their real value must depend upon the wisdom and the virtue of those who manage them. In themselves they can confer neither personal freedom, nor good govern-

ment, nor national prosperity; they are simply a means of obtaining these signal advantages. They are a spell of power, but not of power for good alone. They afford a field for the exercise of all patriotic virtues: while they dispense with none. For France this warning is especially needed; since, in truth, she is trying an experiment which, taken in all its collateral circumstances, is altogether new. The apparent similarity of her institutions to those of England and America should not blind her to this vital fact. She is trying the experiment of the most completely democratic government the world ever saw—with the broad basis of a suffrage all but universal—among a people the vast numerical majority of whom are not only defective in general education, but are wholly destitute of that special political education which habits of municipality (so to speak) can alone bestow. In America general education is cared for, and universally spread among the people to an unparalleled degree; in no country is so large an annual sum willingly raised and expended for this noble purpose. Severe economists in everything else, they are prodigal in this. But this is not all—the Americans have an instinctive faculty for self-government—a faculty which is kept in continual practice. They govern themselves in every detail of social life; in every town, in every village, in every hamlet, they can at once extemporise a municipal administration, without the least aid from the central power. By this means their political education is continually going on; every American is early and daily accustomed to discuss and act in political affairs; and the result is, that he understands these when he understands anything, and often when his education is deplorably defective on all other points. In England, it is true, though political training and habits of combined action are far more widely diffused than in France, yet the mass of our people are

nearly as uneducated; but then we have a very limited suffrage, and a still powerful aristocracy. France, in her perilous political experiment, possesses neither the safeguards of America nor those of England.

We do not mean to predict that therefore the experiment must fail — we hope better things; but we say that it must encounter dangers severer than have menaced either of its prototypes; and that its success must depend upon the manifestation of qualities to which Frenchmen have not yet made good their claim. Their perils are obvious; and we think their course is clear. It will not mend the matter to seek, either by fraud or force, to give the cards another shuffle. Having based their constitution on universal suffrage, and having thus secured a fair and simple means of ascertaining the popular will, their plain duty is not to flinch from the consequences of this fundamental principle, but to bow to that will as the supreme law. It is more sensible and more conservative than they suppose. Let them enlighten it as fast as they may — change it when they can by eloquence and reason; but obey it unreservedly while unchanged. Let it be recognised on the part of all — as an axiom of their understanding, a dogma of their creed, a fixed, unquestionable rule of their public morals — that the *majority must rule*; — that, on the one hand, any appeal to arms or to secret conspiracy on the part of the minority is treason to the majesty of the law, for which no dishonour can be too deep, no penalty too sharp or peremptory; that, on the other hand, (as a correlative proposition) any attempt by their Rulers to coerce, prevent, or vitiate that free expression of the popular voice by which only the real majority can be ascertained, is an equal treason and equal crime.

Majorities and minorities have reciprocal rights and

duties. Any tampering with the fair broad basis of the suffrage — any fetters upon free discussion — any restrictions on the decent freedom of the press — are, on the part of the victorious majority, as clear, undoubted violations of the rights of their antagonists, as insurrection and conspiracies would be on the part of the defeated minority. While every man has a vote, and full freedom in the expression of his views, no excuse can exist for violence or secret plots. On the other hand, while every man bows to the decision of the aggregate votes of the community, no excuse can exist for tyranny on the side of the dominant party. Everything must be decided by votes, and votes must be gained by discussion. This is the inevitable corollary of the Revolution: in accepting it frankly, and following it out boldly, lies now the only hope of freedom or salvation — the endeavour to escape from it can lead only to bloodshed and confusion. In a forbearing respect for each other's rights the antagonist parties will do well to seek safety and peace. For if peace is their object, to this they must come at last. Otherwise, as long as each persists in encroaching on the power and province of the other — in pursuing secretly ulterior designs incompatible with loyalty to the constitution they have sworn to maintain — in employing power, when they have obtained it, to cripple and disarm their opponents — in refusing allegiance to any government, and obedience to any law, which does not embody their own crotchets, or which is not established by their own party — we can see no prospect but continued turbulence and final anarchy. If the President *will* make secret war on the Assembly, and intrigue for an illegal augmentation or continuance of power — if the Assembly *will* thwart the President and encroach upon his functions — if the conservative majority *will* fetter the press, and disfranchise



half France, because it fears the Socialist minority — while the Socialist minority lives, moves, and breathes in a perpetual conspiracy against government and order — the issue cannot be either distant or doubtful; and, end how it may, the result cannot but be lastingly injurious to France, and discrediting to the cause of Representative Government all over the world.

## FRANCE SINCE 1848.\*

FRANCE is, κατ' ἐξοχήν, the land of experiment, as England is the land of compromise. There is scarcely a religious, political, or social experiment she has not tried; scarcely a religious, political, or social phase which she has not passed through. The form of Romanism in its narrowest and harshest bigotry which she exhibited towards the close of the reign of Louis XIV., was exchanged under his successors for a wild, angry, aggressive infidelity. This in its turn was succeeded by a cold and contemptuous indifference, which is now giving place to a somewhat more hopeful spirit in the poetical and mystical faith of Lamennais and Lamartine among the adherents of the old creed, and to the stiff and dogmatic opinions of Guizot, Coquerel, and Quinet among the votaries of the new. In polity France was at one time a military aristocracy, when the Guises and the Condés were almost the equals of the reigning prince. Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis XIV. curbed the power of these rival potentates, and established a central and relentless despotism, which lasted till 1789, and was then followed in rapid succession by the most democratic of republics and the most stern of military empires,—by a restoration, a second revolution, a constitutional limited monarchy, a third revolution, and an anomalous, ambiguous, tottering republic. The social changes which the country has undergone have been no less startling. Vassals and serfs

\* From the "North British Review."

*Revue des deux Mondes.* Paris: 1849, 1850.

till sixty years ago, the people suddenly became, first, the equals, then the tyrants of their former masters; and after losing their power under the empire, and being firmly repressed under the succeeding dynasties, they saw Communism for one short period actually triumphant and in power, and are still struggling to replace it at the Luxembourg. The middle classes, non-existent or insignificant under the old monarchy, and unwisely despised by Napoleon, have been dominant since 1830, and promise to remain so still; while the aristocracy, formerly the proudest and mightiest in Europe, have sunk into apparently hopeless impotence, retaining even their titles with difficulty, and in occasional abeyance. Hitherto, in all the manifold forms which her government and her society have assumed, France has been almost equally unfortunate: she has travelled round the whole circle of national possibilities, and like Milton's Satan, has contrived constantly "to ride with darkness."

When the revolution of 1848 once more summoned her to the task of reconstruction, that task was far more difficult than at any former period. In 1789 her course was comparatively clear, and her materials comparatively rich. There were scandalous and universally recognised abuses to be removed; enormous grievances to be redressed; shameful oppressions to be cancelled; and rights long and cruelly withheld to be conferred. There might be danger in all these changes; but the changes were rendered necessary by decency and justice; and the necessity was clearly seen. The old theories of government and society were to be swept away, but the new ones had been long ready to take their place. Men might be mistaken as to the value of the objects they had at heart, and might overestimate the advantages which were to flow from their attainment; but they had no doubt or confusion as to what these objects

were. They knew what they wanted. The enthusiasm of the reformers might be irrational, and their faith fanatical; but they *had* a faith and an enthusiasm as earnest as ever carried martyrs unflinching to the stake. They had a new political framework to construct, but they had the constituent elements of that framework ready to their hand: they had an existing though a damaged monarchy; they had an aristocracy, frivolous, corrupt, and haughty, but still retaining some of the better elements of nobility within its bosom, and numbering many generous and worthy men among its ranks; and they had a *tiers-état*, indignant at past oppressions, thirsting for the promised freedom, energetic, trusting, simple, and with a loyalty not yet utterly extinguished. The court, the clergy, the high nobility were discredited and corrupt; but corruption had not yet penetrated the heart of the common people. They had a hard task to fulfil, but the means of its accomplishment were within reach: there was devotion, energy, and zeal in ample measure—there was high virtue and aspiring genius—there was eloquence of the loftiest order, and courage tried in many a conflict, all girding up their loins and buckling on their armour for the struggle.

In 1799, the task was a clearer and a ruder one still—it was simply to replace an anarchy of which all were sick and weary, by a strong government of any kind. In 1830, it was simply to enthrone a monarch who would govern according to the law, in the place of one who sought to govern by his own foolish and wicked will. But in 1848, when to the amazement of all and with scarcely any note of warning, the monarch fled and the dynasty and the constitution crumbled away like dust; and when the social as well as the political structure seemed to be resolved into its original elements, France saw before it a labour of a far more

herculean cast, surrounded with far more formidable difficulties, and demanding a profounder wisdom. It was not the reconstruction of a shattered cabinet—it was not the restoration of a fallen dynasty—it was not even the reform and purification of a partial and perverted constitution:—it was the re-edification of society itself,—of a society corrupt to its very core,—in which all the usual constituents of the social edifice were poisoned, damaged, discredited, or non-existent—in which the monarchy was despised—in which the aristocracy was powerless—in which the clergy was without influence or general respect—in which the leading politicians could not furnish forth a single man able to command the confidence of the people—in which the middle classes were hopelessly selfish and devoted to material interests, and the mass of the lower orders were enduring severe privations, and swayed to and fro by the wildest theories and the most impracticable aspirations.

The purely political difficulties which presented themselves to the reconstructing statesmen of 1848, were the least they had to encounter. Yet these were embarrassing enough. When James II. abdicated or was dismissed from the English throne in 1688, he had only one rival and possible successor. The nation, too, as far as it could be said to be divided at all, was divided between the adherents of James and those of William of Orange. The old parties of Cromwell's days were extinct or powerless. But in France there were, and are still, four distinct parties,—any two of them capable by their junction of paralysing and checkmating the others,—any three of them, by their union, able to overpower and drive out the fourth. There were the old Legitimists, who acknowledged no monarch but the exiled Count de Chambord; not strong in numbers, or in influence, or in genius; inexperienced and unskilful in political action, and singularly defective

in political sagacity; strangely blind to the signs of the times; living in dreams of the past and visions of the future;—but strong in this one point, that they alone of all the parties which divided France, had a living political faith, firm religious convictions, earnest ancestral and traditional affections, a distinct principle to fight for, and an acknowledged banner to rally round. Though not numbering many adherents or vassals even in the remoter and less altered provinces, their position in society as the undoubted heads of the polite and fashionable world, and embracing the oldest and most respected families of the ancient aristocracy, gave them a certain influence which, much as the prestige of high birth has been dissipated in France, was still not inconsiderable.

Next to them came the Imperialists—those whom recollections of former glory, and worship of the memory of the most wonderful man of modern times, attached to anything that bore the name or the impress of Napoleon. Their chief strength lay in the army, whose veterans looked upon their great captain almost as on a demigod, whose soldiers had known no spoil, and whose marshals no glory, since the empire had departed, whose thoughts were always dwelling on the campaigns of Jena and Marengo, who were constantly thirsting to renew the triumphs of Austerlitz, and to wipe out the discomfiture of Waterloo. But, besides the army, this party could count a great number of adherents among the middle classes, who remembered how Napoleon had restored order and stability at home, while he extended the boundaries and the influence of France abroad; how he had opened by force new Continental markets for their produce; how he had stimulated industry, protected commerce, and covered the land with roads, bridges, and public institutions. Among the commercial people, too, there were many who regretted the times when



commissaries and contractors grew wealthy in a single year, and when a hardy speculation or a glorious campaign supplied wherewithal to found and endow a family. The peasantry of France, too, were Buonapartists almost to a man, as far as they had any political predilections at all. It was Napoleon who had reorganised society after the horrors of the revolution. If it was Napoleon who had taken their sons and brothers as conscripts, it was he also who had led them on to renown, and often to wealth and distinction. He wrote his name indelibly on the very soil in every department of France; his is literally the only name known in the agricultural provinces and among the ignorant and stationary cultivators of the land. The demagogues who agitated France and the ruffians who ruined her before his time, as well as the monarchs who have ruled her since, have passed away and left no trace,—but Napoleon is remembered and regretted everywhere; his is the only fame which has survived the repeated catastrophes of sixty years, and floats uningulfed on the waters of the deluge. Many of the peasantry have never realised his death. Many even believe, incredible as it may seem, that it is he himself who now rules France. The overwhelming majority which elected Louis Napoleon to the Presidency surprised no one who has had an opportunity of conversing with the peasantry in the less visited districts of the country.

The third party was the Orleanists, or adherents of the existing dynasty. They were numerous and powerful, and comprised many sections. They included a great majority of the middle ranks, nearly the whole of the commercial classes, and five-sixths of the practical, sober, and experienced politicians of the land. Besides those who were attached to the government by long connection, by old habit, by services rendered or benefits received, the Orleans dynasty rallied round it all the friends of constitutional liberty, all admirers of the

English system, all who hoped by means of the charter—imperfect and mutilated as it was—and of the two Chambers—restricted as was the suffrage, and corrupt as was often the influence brought to bear upon the elections—gradually to train France to a purer freedom, and a higher degree of self-government; to tide over the period of national boyhood and inexperience, and navigate the vessel of the state through the rocks and shoals which menaced it, into smoother waters and more tranquil times;—all the moneyed men, too, to whom confusion, uncertainty, and change are fraught with impoverishment and ruin; all that class, so numerous, especially in Paris, who lived by supplying the wants of travellers and foreign residents; all whose idol was order, by whatever means it might be enforced, and at whatever price it might be purchased, and who saw no chance of peace or stability save under Louis Philippe's rule; and, finally, all belonging to that vast and indescribable section of every nation, who owned no allegiance, who worshipped no ideal, who sacrificed to no principle, whom Dante has scorched with his withering contempt, as neither good nor bad, but simply, and before everything, selfish. The strength of this party lay in its wealth, in its political experience, in its cultivation of the material interests of the country, in the sympathy of England, and in all those nameless advantages which long possession of the reins of power, under a government of centralisation, never fails to confer.

Lastly, came the Republicans, divided, like the Orleanists, into many sections. There were the republicans on principle—stern, honest, able, and uncompromising, of whom Cavaignac may be taken as the living, and Armand Carrel as the departed, type. They had clear, though often wild, conceptions of liberty—an intelligible, though an impracticable, political theory; they worshipped a noble, though generally a classical,

ideal, for which they were as ready to die and to kill, as any martyr who was ever bound to the stake. They belonged to the same order of men as the Cromwells and the Harrisons of England, and the Balfours of Scotland, with the difference, that their fanaticism was not religious, but political. Still they were, for the most part, estimable for their character, respectable in talents, and eminently formidable from the concentrated and resolute determination of their zeal. — There were the republicans by temperament—the young, the excitable, and the poetic, who longed for an opportunity of realising the dreams of their fancy, whose associations of freedom and renown all attached themselves to the first phase of the old revolution, and whose watchword was “the year 1793.” Such are to be found in nearly all countries. Their mental characteristic belongs rather to the time of life, than to the nation or the age. Still they have played a prominent part in all French convulsions. The Ecole Polytechnique has an historical fame.—Then there were the Socialist republicans, whose hostility was directed less against any dynasty or form of government, than against the arrangements of society itself; who conceived that the entire system of things was based upon a wrong foundation, and who saw, in the overthrow of existing powers, the only chance of remodelling the world after their fashion. Of these Louis Blanc was the leader; and among his followers were hundreds of thousands of the operative classes, soured and maddened with privations, thirsty for enjoyment, and intoxicated with the brilliant and beautiful perspective so eloquently sketched out before them—but, for the most part sincere, well-meaning, ignorant, and gullible, and easily dazzled and misled to wrong by the lofty and sonorous watchwords which their mischievous guides knew so well how to pronounce.—Lastly, there were the wretches who in troubled times come at the heels of every party, to soil its banner, to

disgrace its fortunes, to stain its name—who profit by its victory, and slink away from it in defeat. The idle, who disdained to labour; the criminal, who lived by plunder; the savage, whose element was uproar; men who hated every government, because they had made themselves amenable to the laws of all; thieves and murderers, whom the galley and the prison had disgorged—all these obscene and hideous constituents stalked forth from their dens to swell the ranks of the republicans, and to pillage and slay in the name of the republic.

Such were the political parties, in the midst of whose noisy and furious hostility France was called upon to constitute a strong and stable government, on the morrow of that amazing catastrophe, which, on the 24th of February, 1848, had upset a constitution, chased away a dynasty, and left society itself in a state of abeyance, if not of dissolution. The provisional authorities—partly self-elected, partly voted in by acclamation, partly foisted in by low and impudent intrigue—had proclaimed a republic, without waiting to give the nation time to express its volition in the matter, and without any intention of deferring to this volition even when expressed. To establish and consolidate a republican form of government was thus the task assigned to the country;—a task which the existence of the several parties we have enumerated would alone have sufficed to make perplexing and difficult enough. But impediments far more serious were behind. All things considered, the problem was probably the hardest ever set before a nation:—to reconstruct society on a stable foundation, with all the usual elements of society absent or broken up, —without a monarch, without an aristocracy, without a religion,—with no principle unquestioned, with no truth universally admitted and revered, with no time-honoured institution left standing

amid the ruins. She had to do all this, and more, in spite of nearly every obstacle which the past and the present could gather round her, and in the absence of nearly every needed instrument for the work. With antecedents in her history—with monuments on her soil—with arrangements in her social structure—with elements in her national character—which seemed peremptorily to forbid and exclude republicanism, she endeavoured to construct a republic, and seemed resolved to be satisfied with nothing else. With no honest, high-minded, or venerated statesmen, standing out like beacon-lights among the multitude, whom all were emulous to love, honour, and obey, she was called upon to undertake a work which only the loftiest intellects, operating upon the most trusting and submissive people, could satisfactorily accomplish. She set herself to rival and surpass, in their most difficult achievements, nations that differed from her in nearly every element of their national life. With a pervading military spirit—with a standing force of nearly half a million, and an armed and trained population amounting to two millions more—with a centralised despotic bureaucracy—with Versailles and the Tuilleries ever recalling the regal magnificence of former days—with an excitable temper, an uncommercial spirit, and a subdivided soil—she is endeavouring to imitate and exceed that political liberty, and hoping successfully to manage those democratic institutions, which have been the slow and laborious acquisitions of Britain, with her municipal habits and her liberal nobility; of America, with her long-trained faculty of self-government, her boundless and teeming territory, and her universally diffused material well-being; of Switzerland, with her mountainous regions and her historic education; and of Norway, with her simple, hardy, and religious population, and her barren and untempting soil.

Let us look a little more closely into a few of those peculiarities in the national character and circumstances, which appear to render the present struggles of the French after a constitution at once stable and democratic, so difficult if not so hopeless.

And, first, as to RACE. Races of men, like individuals, have their distinct type, their peculiar genius, which is the product of their origin, their physiological organisation, their climate, and the development of civilisation through which they have passed,—which is, in fact, their inheritance from ancient times. Few European nations are of pure blood; almost all contain several elements, and are the more sound and vigorous for the admixture. The French and the English have in common something of the Norman and something of the Teutonic blood; but in England the prevailing element is the Saxon sub-variety of the Teutonic; in France the prevailing element is the Gallic sub-variety of the Celtic. From our Norman conquerors we derive that intellectual activity, that high resolve, those habits of conquest and command, so characteristic of our upper ranks, and which have spread by intermarriage through all classes. From our German forefathers we inherit our phlegm, our steadiness, our domestic habits, and our unhappy addiction to spirituous liquors. The predominance of Frank and Norman blood gave to the old aristocracy of France those generous and noble qualities which so long distinguished the class; but since it was submerged in the great deluge which desolated the closing years of the last century, the Celtic element which pervades the great mass of the people has shone forth paramount and nearly unmodified. Now, the Teuton and the Celt have characteristics and capacities wholly dissimilar. According to the masterly analysis of our first ethnographical authority, M. Gustaf



Kombst, the distinctive marks of the former are slowness but accuracy of perception, a just, deep, and penetrating, but not quick or brilliant intellect. The distinctive peculiarities of the Celt, on the contrary, are quickness of perception, readiness of combination, wit, and fertility of resource. The passion of the Celt is for national power and grandeur; that of the Teuton for personal freedom and self-rule. The Teuton is hospitable, but unsocial and reserved; the Celt is immoderately fond of society, of amusement, and of glory. The one is provident and cautious; the other impetuous and rash. The one values his own life, and respects that of others; the other sets little value upon either. Respect for women is the characteristic of the Teuton; passion for women the characteristic of the Celt.\* The latter is intemperate in love; the former is intemperate in wine. The fancy of the one is sensuous; that of the other ideal. Lastly, the religious element presents diverse manifestations in the two races;—in the Celt there is a latent tendency towards polytheism, while the Teuton displays a decided preference for monotheistic views;—Romanism retains an almost unshaken hold over the former; Protestantism has achieved its victories exclusively among the latter.

Now, these distinctions are not fancies of our own, derived from a glance at France, Germany, and England, under their present phases; they are taken on the authority of a philosopher, whose conclusions are the result of long study, and of the widest range of observation. The general accuracy of the delineation will be generally acknowledged, and can scarcely fail to impress us with the improbability that institutions which are indigenous among one of these great divisions

\* Dr. Kombst remarks, as a constant fact, the existence of Foundling Hospitals among Celtic nations, and their absence among those of Teutonic origin.

of humanity should flourish and survive when they are transplanted into the other. Self-government, and the forms and appliances of political freedom, are plants of native growth in England and America; they are only delicate and valuable exotics in France. These national discrepancies manifest themselves in public life in a thousand daily forms. The Englishman is practical, business-like, and averse to change; his imagination, though powerful, is not easily excited; his views and aims are positive, unideal, and distinct. The Frenchman is ambitious, restless, and excitable—aspiring after the perfect; *passionné pour l'inconnu*; prone to “*la recherche de l'absolu*,” constantly, as Lamartine says, wrecking his chance or his possession of the good “*par l'impatience du mieux*.” The Englishman, in his political movements, knows exactly what he wants; his object is definite, and is generally even the recovery of something that has been lost, the abolition of some excrescence or abuse, the recurrence to some venerated precedent. The Frenchman is commonly aroused by the vague desire of something new, something vast, something magnificent; he prefers to fly to evils that he knows not of, rather than to bear those with which he is familiar. His golden age beckons to him out of the untried and unrealised future; ours is placed almost as baselessly, but far less dangerously, in the historic past. The Frenchman is given to scientific definitions and theories in politics; the Englishman turns on all such things a lazy and contemptuous glance. The former draws up formal declarations of the rights of man, but has an imperfect understanding of his own, and is apt to overlook those of others; the latter never descants on his rights, but exercises them daily as a matter of course, and defends them stoutly when attacked. The one is confident in his own opinion, though he be almost alone in his adhesion to it; the

other has always a secret misgiving that he is wrong when he does not agree with the majority. All these are so many criteria of the possession of that "political instinct," that native aptitude for administrative business, the defect of which in the French people has hitherto rendered all their attempts at a working constitution so abortive.

Next, as to RELIGION,—the absence of which as a pervading element is a deplorable feature of the national character of France. The decay of her religious spirit dates from the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. That fatal measure, while it banished Protestantism, struck Romanism with impotence and a paralytic languor. "The Gallican Church, no doubt, looked upon this revocation as a signal triumph. But what was the consequence? Where shall we look after this period for her Fénétons and her Pascals? where for those bright monuments of piety and learning which were the glory of her better days? As for piety, she perceived that she had no occasion for it, when there was no longer any lustre of Christian holiness surrounding her; nor for learning, when there were no longer any opponents to confute or any controversies to maintain. She felt herself at liberty to become as ignorant, as secular, as irreligious as she pleased; and amidst the silence and darkness she had created around her she drew the curtains and retired to rest."\* To the forced and gloomy bigotry which marked the declining years of Louis Quatorze succeeded the terrible reaction of the regency and the following reigns. Amid the orgies of weary and satiated profligacy arose first a spirit of scoffing, then of savage, vindictive, and aggressive scepticism. The whole intellect of that acute and brilliant people ranged itself on the side of irre-

\* Robert Hall—Review of "Zeal without Innovation."

ligion; and nothing was left to oppose to the wits, the philosophers, and the encyclopedists, save cold prosings which it was a weariness to listen to, frauds and fictions which it would have been imbecility to credit, pretensions which the growing enlightenment of the age laughed to scorn, and the few rags of traditional reverence which the indolent, luxurious, and profligate lives of the clergy were fast tearing away. The unbelief of the higher ranks spread rapidly to those below them: some were unbelievers from conviction, some from fashion, some from a low and deplorable ambition to ape their superiors. "Bien que je ne suis qu'un pauvre coiffeur," said a hair-dresser to his employer one day in 1788, "je n'ai plus de croyance qu'un autre." But worse than this, all that was warm or generous in human sympathies, all that was hopeful or promising for human progress, all that was true and genuine in native feeling, was found on the side of the philosophers. Religion ranged itself on the side of ignorance and despotism. Scepticism fought the battle of justice, of science, of political and civil freedom. The philosophers had truth and right on their side in nearly everything but their assaults on Christianity; and the Christianity then presented to the nation was scarcely recognisable as such. The result of these unnatural and unhappy combinations has been that religion has been indissolubly associated in the mind of the French with puerile conceits, with intellectual nonsense, with political oppression; while infidelity wears in their eyes the cap of liberty, the robes of wisdom, the civic crown of patriotic service.

Even the shocking license into which atheism wandered under the republic produced nothing more genuine or deep than the reaction towards decency under Napoleon. The nation remained at heart either wholly indifferent or actively irreligious; and such, in

spite of growing exceptions, it continues to this day, by the confession of those even among its own people who know it best. The two reigns of the Restoration, and that of Louis Philippe, rather aggravated than mitigated the evil. The effect of this national deficiency in the religious element, is to augment to a gigantic height the difficulty of building up either society or government in France. Its noxious operation can scarcely be overrated. The foundation-rock is gone; the very basis is a shifting quicksand. The habitual reverence for a Supreme Being, whose will is law, and whose laws are above assault, question, or resistance; the sense of control and the duty of obedience which flow from this first great conviction, — lie at the bottom of all community and all rule; without these it is difficult to see how the constructive task can even be commenced.

The absence of a fundamental and pervading religious faith has shown itself in France in two special consequences, either of which would suffice to make the work set before them not merely herculean, but nearly hopeless. The first is this: — France prides herself upon being a land in which pure reason is the only authority extant. She has no *prejudices* to lie at the root of her philosophy, no doctrine settled and universally adopted and laid by as an everlasting possession, — α κτήμα ἐς αἰν, — in the sacred archives of the nation. She has no *axioms* which it would be insanity or sacrilege to question. Everything is matter for speculation, for doubt, for discussion. The very opinions which, with all other people, have long since passed into the category of first principles, are with her still themes for the wit of the saloon and the paradoxical declamation of the schoolboy. The simplest and clearest rules of duty, the most established maxims of political and moral action, the assumptions, or the proved premises which lie at the root of all social arrangements, dogmatic facts the most

ancient and widely recognised, have in France every morning to be considered and discussed anew. Every belief and opinion, without exception, is daily remanded into the arena of question and of conflict. Topics the most frivolous and the most sacred, truths the most obvious and the most recondite, doctrines the clearest and the most mystical, are perpetually summoned afresh before the judgment-seat of logic, till none can by any possibility obtain a firm and undisputed hold upon the mind. The fact is not wonderful, though its consequences are enormously pernicious. It is the inherited misfortune of a generation which has grown up in the vortex of a political and moral whirlpool, where nothing was stable, nothing permanent; where it was impossible to point to a system, an institution, or a creed, *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*; where one philosophy after another chased its predecessor from the stage; where one form of government was scarcely seated on the throne before its successor drove it into exile; where, in a word, there was not a school, a doctrine, or a dynasty, of which men of mature age (to use the fine and pathetic language of Grattan) had not "rocked the cradle and followed the hearse," — not an institution extant and surviving of which nearly every one alive could not remember the time when *it was not*. The result of all this has been that an entirely different class of subjects from those ordinarily agitated in settled countries has come up. Instead of discussing whether a monarch should govern or only reign, they are discussing whether the lowest and most ignorant orders of the mob should not have the actual sovereignty in their hands. Instead of considering modifications in the laws of landed inheritance, they are disputing whether the very institution of property be not in itself a robbery. Instead of differing on details of the law of marriage and divorce, they are bringing into question



the subject of family ties, and the relation between the sexes in its entirety. Their struggles are not on behalf of religious liberty, nor for this Church, nor for that sect, but for or against those fundamental ideas which are common to all creeds alike. It is not such or such a political innovation, such or such a social or hierarchical reform which form the subject of habitual controversy; it is the religious, political, and moral groundwork of society that is at stake and in dispute.

We are here at once led to the recognition of that great fact which explains, better than any divergence of historic antecedents, or any dissimilarity of national character, the startling contrast between the failure of the French Revolution, and the success of that great English movement of the seventeenth century which corresponds to it. M. Guizot, with his accustomed sagacity, has in his last work placed his finger upon this distinction, though he abstains from following out a contrast so painful and unfavourable to his countrymen. The French Revolution followed on a sceptical and philosophic movement of men's minds. The English Revolution followed on a period of deep religious excitement. The English revolutionists were even more attached to their religious faith than to their political opinions. They fought for liberty of conscience even more fiercely than for civil rights. "Ce fut la fortune de l'Angleterre au xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle, que l'esprit de foi religieuse et l'esprit de liberté politique y régnaient ensemble. Toutes les grandes passions de la nature humaine se déployèrent ainsi *sans qu'elle brisât tous ses freins*." The English political reformers were pious Christians, whose faith was an earnest, stimulating, exalting, strengthening reality;—the French political reformers, on the other hand, were atheists, brought up in the school of the Encyclopedists to despise and deride all that other men held sacred, whose passions, interests, and preju-

dices, therefore, found no internal impediment to their overflow. The Puritans unquestionably were bold reformers of religious matters as well as of political ones; they indeed attacked and overthrew the established creed, while maintaining intact the common principles of the Christian faith; but in the midst of their successes—in the chaos of ruins both of temples and palaces which, like Samson, they heaped round them—there was something left always standing which all sects revered and spared. They still, as M. Guizot beautifully says, recognised and bowed down before *a law which they had not made*. It was this law which they had not made—this boundary wall not built with hands—which was wanting to the French reformers: to them everything was human; on no side did they meet an obstacle, acknowledged as divine, which commanded them to stop in their career of conquest and destruction. The consequence was, that in the one case the *bouleversement* reached only the secondary and derivative,—in the other, it embraced the primitive, fundamental, and indispensable institutions of social life.

The second special operation of French irreligion on society may be thus explained:—The thirst after happiness is natural to the human heart, and inseparable from its healthy action. After this happiness we all strive, though with every imaginable difference as to the intensity of our desire, and the conception of our aim,—as to the scene in which we locate it, and the means we employ to arrive at it. The cultivated, the virtuous, and the wise, place their happiness in the gratification of the affections, and the development of the intellectual and moral powers. Material welfare they value indeed, but they pursue it with a moderate and restrained desire. To the ignorant and the sensual, happiness consists in physical enjoyment and the possession of the

good things of life. The paradise of the religious man is laid in a future and spiritual world ; that of the unbeliever — practical or theoretic — in some earthly Eden. On the belief or disbelief in the immortality of the soul, will practically depend both the nature and the locality of the heaven we desire. Now the French — that is, that active and energetic portion of them which gives the tone to the whole people — repudiate the doctrine of a future life, and yet are vehement aspirants after enjoyment. They are well described by one of themselves as "*passionnés pour le bonheur matériel.*" The effect of the disbelief in a future world is, of course, not only to turn all their desires and efforts after happiness upon this, but to make their conception of the happiness of this life essentially and exclusively earthly, and to cause them to pursue it with the impatience, the hurry, the snatching avidity of men who feel that *now or never is their time*, that every moment that elapses before their object is grasped is a portion of bliss lost to them for ever. Those who, however dissatisfied with their portion of this world's goods, still, like the majority — a decreasing majority we fear — of our English working classes, retain some belief in a future life, can strive after the improvement of their earthly lot with a more deliberate and less angry haste ; for if they fail, their happiness is not denied, but only postponed to a more distant and a better day.

" To them there never came the thought  
That this their life was meant to be  
A pleasure-house, where peace unbought  
Should minister to pride or glee.

" Sublimely they endure each ill  
As a plain fact, whose right or wrong  
They question not, confiding still  
That it shall last not overlong :

“Willing, from first to last, to take  
 The mysteries of our life as given;  
 Leaving the time-worn soul to slake  
 Its thirst in an undoubted heaven.”

But if this earth is indeed all, then no time is to be lost, no excuse or delay is to be listened to. It is natural, it is logical, it is inevitable for those who hold this dreary creed to scout as insults those cautions as to the danger of going too fast, those maxims of wisdom which would assure us that social wellbeing is a plant of slow growth, that we must be satisfied with small and rare instalments of amelioration, that we must be content to sow the seed in this generation, and leave our children, or our children's children, to reap the fruit. These indisputable truths sound like cruel mockery to the man who, suffering under actual and severe privations, regards a future existence as the dream of the poet, or the invention of the priest.

The immeasurable and impatient appetite for material felicity, which is now one of the distinctive traits of French society, and which is the legitimate offspring of her irreligion, is beyond question the deepest and most dangerous malady which the state physician has to deal with; for the Frenchman is not only logical, but always ready and anxious to translate his logic into practice. If our lot is to be worked out, and our nature to receive its full development on earth, we must set to work at once, at all hazards, and in spite of all obstacles, to construct that present paradise which is to be our only one. One of the historians of the recent revolution, who writes under the pseudonyme of Daniel Sterne, has the following just remark:—“S'il est vrai de dire que le socialisme semble au premier abord une extension du principe de fraternité, apporté au monde par Jésus-Christ, il est en même temps et surtout une réaction

contre le dogme essentiel du Christianisme, la Chute et l'Expiation. On pourrait, je crois, avec plus de justesse, considérer le socialisme comme une tentative pour *matérialiser* et *immédiatiser*, si l'on peut parler ainsi, la vie future et le paradis spirituel des Chrétiens." Hence these Socialist and Communistic schemes, those plans for the re-organisation of society on a new and improved footing, which have taken such a strong hold on the imagination and affection of the French *prolétaires*. Hence the eagerness and ready credulity with which they listen to any orators or theorists who promise them, by some royal road, some magic change, the wellbeing which they believe to be both attainable and their due. Hence, too, that daring, unscrupulous, unrelenting impetuosity, with which these social iconoclasts emulate the fanaticism of religious sectaries, and drive their car of triumph over ranks and institutions, over principalities and powers, over all the rich legacies and pathetic associations of the past, as remorselessly as did the daughter of Servius over the scarce lifeless body of her father.

This passion for material wellbeing—this "haste to be happy"—is by no means confined to the socialist schemers or the operative classes. It pervades ranks far above them, more especially those members of the *bourgeoisie* who have entered the liberal professions without any means or qualifications except natural aptitude and intellectual culture; the advocates, surgeons, artists, journalists, and men of letters. These are described by one who knows them well as the section of French society whose material condition is the most unsatisfactory and incongruous, while the influence they exert on the fortunes of the country is the most powerful. Their life is a combination of revolting contrasts,—a feverish and perpetual struggle. Their cultivated intellect, their excited fancy, raise them every moment to a dazzling height, and show

them in dreams all the felicities and grandeurs of the earth; while their waking hours "must stoop to strive with misery at the door," and be passed in conflict with the anxieties and humiliations of actual indigence or uncertain remuneration. They live in daily contact with men, their superiors in power and wealth, their equals or inferiors in character, in talent, or in cultivation; and the comparison disgusts them with inequalities of fortune, and the gradations of the social hierarchy. Their ambition, everywhere excited, and everywhere crushed back, finding in society as constituted, no clear field, no adequate recompense, no prizes satisfying to their wants or glorious enough for their conceptions, sets itself to the task of reconstructing society afresh, after the pattern of their dreams. From this class are furnished the chiefs of the socialist and revolutionary movements;—men whose desires are at war with their destiny; and who in place of chastening and moderating the former, would re-fashion and reverse the latter.

There is yet another class, swayed by loftier motives, but pulling in the same direction. These are perhaps the most formidable of all, because their enthusiasm is of a more unselfish order, and flows from a purer spring. These are men of high powers and a fine order of mind, with little faith, or at most only a mystical and dreamy one, in God or in futurity, but overflowing with generous sympathies and worshipping a high ideal,—shocked and pained with the miseries they see around them, and confident in their capability of cure. They are a sort of political Werthers, profoundly disgusted with the actual condition of the world; the lofty melancholy, inseparable from noble minds, broods darkly over their spirits; an indescribable sadness

“Deepens the murmur of the falling floods;”—

they are disenchanted with life, and hold it cheap, for it realises none of their youthful visions; they deem that this world ought to be a paradise, and believe it might be made such; and, feeling existence to be not worth having, unless the whole face of things can be renewed, and the entire arrangements of society changed, they are prepared to encounter anything, and to inflict anything, for the promotion of such change. Hence obstacles do not deter them—sacrifices do not appal them—personal danger is absolutely beneath their consideration—and both in France and Germany we have seen them mount the barricades and fight in the streets with a contempt of death which was utterly amazing, and seemed to have nothing in common either with the vaunting heroism of the French soldier, or the systematic and stubborn courage of the English, or the hardy indifference of the Russian. France has martyrs still—martyrs as willing and enthusiastic as ever—but their cause is no longer that of old. Instead of martyrs who suffered death for freedom, for country, for religion, for devotion to the moral law, we have men ready to encounter martyrdom for objects scarcely worthy of the sacrifice,—for the exigencies of the passions, for the conquest of material felicity, for the realisation of an earthly paradise.

The degree to which this universal and insatiable thirst for present and immediate enjoyment, and the schemes, associations, and ambitions to which it gives rise, must complicate the difficulties of any government formed at a time when such desires and such attempts at their realisation are rife, must be obvious at a glance. One special point which even aggravates these difficulties, we shall have to recur to presently.

Side by side with the absence of religion in France—partly as a consequence, partly as a co-existing effect of remoter causes, there prevailed a deep-seated torpor and perversion of moral principle. We do not mean



that there was not much virtue, much simple honesty, much conscientious adherence to the dictates of the moral sense, still to be found in many classes of the people, among the unsophisticated peasantry of the interior, among the scanty and scattered rural gentry who lived on their estates, and even among the artisan class of the cities. But a profound and mean immorality had spread its poisonous influence deep and wide through nearly all those ranks which, either directly or indirectly, act upon the government, and give the tone to the national character and the direction to the national policy. So obvious was this painful truth, that it escaped neither foreigner nor native;—it led to a general and frequently expressed, though vague expectation, that some great catastrophe must be at hand; it was dimly felt that nearly all those warning signs—those mystic letters on the wall—by which Providence intimates approaching change, were visible on the face of French society; and we well remember that one individual, thoroughly conversant with that society in all its circles, distinctly predicted the revolution of February more than a year before it occurred, not on the ground of any political symptoms or necessities, but solely from the corruption of morals and manners which pervaded the higher and middle classes,—the politicians, the writers, the commercial men, the artists, the circles of fashion—all alike. License in all that concerned the relations between the sexes was no novelty in France—in this respect the profligacy of the Regency and the Directory could not be surpassed, and indeed was not approached. But the high and scrupulous, though sometimes fantastic and inconsistent sense of honour, which formerly distinguished the French gentleman, seemed to be gone; his regard for truth and even pecuniary integrity was deplorably weakened; the “mire

of dirty ways," whether in political life or in speculative business, no longer instinctively revolted his finer susceptibilities;—that "sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt stain like a wound, which inspired valour, while it mitigated ferocity," had died away under the demoralising influence of the repeated social convulsions of the last sixty years. When religion has become an empty garment, and piety a faded sentiment, and loyalty extinct from want of nourishment, and when strict moral rules have thus lost their fixity and their sanctions, the spirit of a gentleman may for a time, in some measure, supply their place; but if this also has died out, the last barrier to the overflow of the twin vices of licentiousness and barbarity is swept away.

The extent to which this spirit was extinguished was not known to the world till the filthy intrigues connected with the Spanish marriages (since so remorselessly laid bare by the publication of Louis Philippe's private letters), and the suicide of the diplomatic tool concerned in them, the Count de Bresson, out of pure disgust at the dirt he had been dragged through,—first exposed a degree of low turpitude, for which even France was scarcely prepared. Then followed in quick succession the trial and conviction of a cabinet minister and a general officer for dishonesty and peculation in their official capacities, and the awful tragedy of the Duke de Choiseul-Praslin, a member of the highest nobility in France—the murder of his wife as an obstacle to his illegitimate desires, and his own subsequent suicide in prison. When, finally, a statesman and philosopher as high in rank and reputation as Guizot, expressed little surprise and no horror at the corrupt malversation of his former colleague M. Teste, and even consented to soil his lips in public with a quasi-lie, in order to defend the duplicity of his master,—a sort of

shudder ran through the better circles of Europe,—a perception that the measure of iniquity was full, and that the time of retribution must be at hand. It was as if the book had been closed, and the awful fiat had gone forth:—"Ephraim is joined unto idols: *let him alone.*" "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: behold, I come quickly, to give to every man according as his work shall be!"

The prevalent immorality showed itself to the French themselves in many minute symptoms which were unobservable by other nations,—in the looseness of domestic ties, in the grasping and gambling spirit of Parisian society, in the appearance of the *lionnes*, as they were called, and other extravagant indecorums of fashionable life; but to the world at large, it was chiefly signalised in the strange taste and monstrous conceptions which degraded their popular and lighter literature, and in the general corruption which pervaded all departments of the administration. We very much question whether any period of history can furnish a parallel to the French fictitious and dramatic literature of the last twenty years. Former times may have furnished comedies more coarse, tragedies more brutal, novels more profligate; but none displaying a taste so utterly vicious, a style of sentiment so radically false and hollow, a tone and spirit so thoroughly *diseased*. Not only do voluptuous pictures everywhere abound; not only is the unrestrained indulgence of the natural passions preached up as venial, to say the least; not only is the conjugal tie habitually ridiculed or ignored; not only is genius ever busy to throw a halo of loveliness over the most questionable feelings, and the most unquestionable frailties;—but crimes of the darkest dye are chosen by preference, and with research, as the materials of their plot; criminals, black

with every enormity which we hold most loathsome, are the picked and chosen favourites of the play-wright and the novelist; scenes, which the pure and the refined mind shrinks even to dream of, are the commonest localities of their unholy delineations;—and the imagination of the writer is racked to devise the most unnatural occurrences, the most impossible combinations, the most startling horrors. This language sounds like exaggeration; but it will not be deemed such by any one who has even dipped into the cloaca of modern French fiction, from its more moderate phase in Victor Hugo, to its culminating point in “Le Juif errant,” and the “Mystères de Paris.” The favourite plan—the supreme effort—of these writers is to conceive some marvellous event or combination which has no prototype in nature, and could never have presented itself to a sound or healthy fancy; to depict some monstrous criminal, and surround him with the aureole of a saint,—to describe some pure, beautiful, and perfect maiden, and place her, as her atmosphere and cradle, in the lowest and filthiest haunts, where barbarity nestles with licentiousness. Excitement—what the French call *une sensation*—is the one thing sought after; the object to which taste, decency, and artistic probabilities, are all sacrificed: or if any more serious idea and sentiment runs through this class of works, it is that of hostility to the existing arrangements of society,—its inequalities, its restraining laws, its few still unshattered sanctities. It is worthy of remark that Victor Hugo, the author of “Marion de L’Orme,” “Lucrèce Borgia,” “Bug-Jargal,” and “Hans d’Islande,” is a leader of the extreme party in the Chambers; that Eugene Sue, the author of “Atar-Gull,” “Le Juif errant,” and “Les Mystères du Peuple,” is the chosen representative of the more turbulent socialists; and that George Sand (whom we grieve to class with these even for a moment) was the

reputed friend and right hand of the desperate democratic tyrant, Ledru Rollin. Literature in France has become allied not only with democracy—that it may well be without any derogation from its nobility—but with the lowest and most envious passions of the mob, with the worst and most meretricious tastes of the *coulisses* and the saloon. Its votaries and its priests seem to have alike forgotten that they had an ideal to worship, a high ministry to exercise, a sacred mission to fulfil. Excellence, for which in former times men of letters strove with every faculty of their devoted souls,—for the achievement of which they deemed no effort too strenuous, no time too long—is deposed from its “place of pride;” and success,—temporary, momentary, sudden success,—success among a class of readers whose vote can confer no garland of real honour, no crown of enduring immortality,—success, however tarnished, and by what mean and base compliances soever it be won,—is their sole object and reward.

The unwholesome and disordering sentiment which alone could flow from such a school is nearly all that the lighter intellect of France has had to feed upon for more than half a generation; and the corruption of the national taste and morals consequent upon such diet, is only too easily discernible. A passion for unceasing excitement, a morbid craving for mental stimulants thus constantly goaded and supplied, has rendered everything simple, genuine, and solid in literature, everything settled and sober in social relations, everything moderate, stable, and rigid in political arrangements, alike stale and flat. The appetite of the nation is diseased; and to minister to this appetite, or to control and cure it, are the equally difficult and dangerous alternatives now offered to its rulers.

The second form in which the national demoralisation

especially showed itself—at once a fatal symptom and an aggravating cause—was in the general administrative corruption which prevailed. This did not originate under Louis Philippe, but was beyond question vastly increased during his reign; and was not only not discouraged but was actually stimulated by his personal example. The system of place-hunting—the universal mendicancy for public employment, which reached so shameless a height just before the last revolution, found in him one of its worst specimens. No jobbing or begging elector ever besieged the door of the minister for a tobacco-license, or a place in the customs or the passport office, with more impudent pertinacity, than Louis Philippe showed in persecuting the Chambers for *dotations* for his sons. Those who were conversant with the French ministerial bureaux declare, that it is difficult to imagine, and that it was impossible to behold without humiliation and disgust, the passionate covetousness, the mingled audacity and meanness, displayed among the candidates for place. *Everybody* seemed turned into a hanger-on of government, or a petitioner to become so: everybody was seeking a snug berth for himself or for his son, and vowing eternal vengeance against the government if he were refused. The system of civil administration in France—the senseless multiplication of public functionaries—has to thank itself for much of this embarrassing and disreputable scramble. The number of places, more or less worth having, at the disposal of government, appears, by a late return to the Chamber, to exceed 535,000.

“Les Français,” says a recent acute writer in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, “se précipitent vers les fonctions, parceque c’est la seule carrière qui garantisse l’existence même médiocre, et qui permette la sécurité du lendemain. Dans l’espoir d’assurer à leurs enfans un émargement au budget, nous voyons chaque

jour de petits capitalistes consacrer au frais de leur éducation une partie ou la totalité de leur mince héritage. Les fonctions publiques sont considérées comme une assurance sur la vie, ou un placement à fonds perdus. Une place exerce sur l'esprit des familles la même fascination que faisait autrefois une prébende ou un canonicat. Madame de Staël disait autrefois : 'Les Français ne seront satisfaits que lorsqu'on aura promulgué une constitution ainsi conçue ; article unique : Tous les Français sont fonctionnaires ?' Le socialisme ne fait que généraliser sous une autre forme la passion des Français pour les places, et réaliser, sous un autre nom, le mot de Madame de Staël. La Charte du droit au travail peut, en effet, s'énoncer en une seule phrase : Tous les citoyens sont salariés par l'état."

The number of electors in Louis Philippe's time was 180,000—the number of places in the gift of the Crown was 535,000 ; that is, there were three places available for the purpose of bribing each elector. Put this fact side by side with that passion for the position of a government *employé* which we have just described, and it will be obvious that the corruption must have been, as it was, systematic and universal. The electors regarded their votes as a means of purchasing a place. Each deputy was expected to provide in this way for as many of his constituents as possible, and knew that his tenure of his seat depended upon his doing so. Of course he was not likely to forget himself : having purchased his seat, it was natural he should sell his vote. Thus the government bribed the Chambers, and the Chambers bribed the electoral body. Now, from this eleemosynary giving way of places, to *selling* them—from selling them for *support* to selling them for *money*—the step is short and easy.

Some important considerations have been suggested in mitigation of the culpability of Louis Philippe's government in thus corrupting both the candidates and the constituency,—to which, though not pretending to admit their entire justice, we may give whatever weight



they may, on due reflection, seem to deserve. It is questionable (it has been said) whether representative institutions among a corrupt and turbulent people, or a people from any other causes unfit for self-government, do not *necessitate* bribery in some form. It was found so in Ireland: it was found so in those dark times of English history which elapsed from 1600 to 1760. The government of July found representative institutions already established, and was obliged to rule through their instrumentality. The ministers were in this position: a majority in the Chambers was essential to them, to the stability of their position, to the adequacy of their powers. This majority could not be secured, among an excitable and foolish people, by wise measures, by sound economy, by resolute behaviour; nor among a corrupt and venal people, by purity of administration, or steady preference of obscure and unprotected merit. They were the creation of a revolution, which their defeat might renew and perpetuate, and a renewal of which would be, to the last extent, disastrous to the country. They had, therefore, only two alternatives—either to distribute places with a view to the purchase of parliamentary votes, to hand over appointments to deputies for the purchase in their turn of electoral suffrages; or to enlarge the franchise to such an extent as to render bribery impossible, and so throw themselves on the chance which the good sense and fitness for self-rule of the mass of the people might afford them. This they had not nerve enough or confidence enough to do; and who that knows the French people, and has seen their conduct on recent occasions, will venture to say that they were wrong?

If the French nation were fit for representative institutions, if it had the sagacity, the prudence, the virtues needed for self-government, the latter ought to have been the course of the administration of July; if

it had *not* (and who now will venture to pronounce that it had?), the administration had no choice but to command a majority by the only means open to them, viz., corruption. Representative institutions among a people unqualified for them can, therefore, only be worked by corruption, *i.e.*, by distributing the appointments at the disposal of the state with a view to the purchase of parliamentary or electoral support. What government, even in England or America, still less in France—what government, in fact, in any country *not autocratically ruled*—could stand a month if all its appointments were distributed with regard to merit *alone*; if, for example, Lord Stanley refused office to Mr. Disraeli or Lord John Manners because they were less competent to its duties than obscurer men; if Lord Lonsdale or the Duke of Newcastle had all their recommendations treated with merited disregard; if the members for Manchester or London saw their protégés contemptuously and rigidly set aside in favour of abler but less protected men? If corruption essentially consists, as it undeniably does, *in distributing the appointments and favours of the state otherwise than with a sole regard to merit and capacity*—if any deviation from this exclusive rule be corruption in a greater or less degree, then it is clear that some degree of corruption is inherent and inevitable in all representative governments, and that the extent to which it prevails will be in precise inverse proportion to the sagacity and self-denying virtue of the people, *i.e.*, to the degree in which they can endure to see meritorious strangers preferred to less deserving friends. Where, in modern times, shall we find that blended humility and patriotism, which made the rejected candidate for the Lacedæmonian senate go home rejoicing (perhaps with a touch of quiet sarcasm in his tone), “that there were five hundred better men in Sparta than himself?” The people,

therefore, and the institutions, not the rulers, are to blame for the amount of corruption which prevails. If they have the reins in their own hands, and yet cannot guide themselves, they must be governed by circuitous stratagems instead of direct force—for governed *ab extra* they must be. *It is the exclusive prerogative of an autocratic government* to distribute appointments according to merit only. Corruption—*i.e.*, appointments not exclusively according to desert, but with ulterior views, to purchase or reward parliamentary support—is the price which must be paid for free institutions among an imperfect people.

There is much truth in this plea; a plea which will be recognised as valid by each individual, in proportion as he is conversant with administrative life; but it does not affect our argument. For, whether the government of France were excusable or not, the operation of the wholesale, systematic, and unblushing venality and scramble for place which prevailed, was equally indicative of, and destructive to, the morals of the community.

One result of all this—one of the saddest features of French national life, one of the darkest auguries for the future—is the low estimation in which all public men are held; the absence of any great, salient, unstained statesman, whom all revered, whom all could trust, and whom all honest citizens were willing to follow and obey; of any politician who, in times of trial, could influence and sway the people by the force of character alone. They are not only worse off than other nations, at similar crises of their history, they are worse off than themselves ever were before. They have not only no Pericles, no Hampden, no Washington; they have not even a Turgot, a Lafayette, or a Mirabeau. Three only of their public men have been long enough and prominently enough before the world to have made

themselves a European reputation—Guizot, Thiers, and Lamartine. All of these men have been at the head of affairs in turn; all are writers and historians of high fame; all are men of unquestioned genius; and two of them at least are types of a class. Thiers is a Provençal by birth, with all the restless excitability, all the *pétillante* vivacity, all the quenchless fire, all the shrewd, intriguing sagacity of the south. He launched into the mixed career of literature and politics at a very early age, and a characteristic anecdote is related of his first successes. The Academy of Aix, his native town, proposed the *Eloge de Vauvenargues* as the subject of their yearly prize. Thiers sent in an essay (anonymous, as was the rule) which was of paramount merit; but it was suspected to be his, and as he and his patron had many enemies, the academic judges proposed to postpone the adjudication of the prize till the following year, on the ground of insufficient merit in all the rival essays. Some days were yet wanting to the period of final decision. Thiers instantly set to work, and produced with great rapidity another essay on the same text, which he sent in with the post-mark of a distant town. The first prize was instantly adjudged to this, and the second only to the original production; and when both turned out to be the work of the same envied author, the academicians looked foolish enough. Shortly after this youthful stratagem Thiers came to Paris, the great rendezvous for all French talent, and commenced life as a journalist—that line which in France so often leads to eminence and power. His clear, vivacious, and energetic style, and the singular vigour and frequent depth of his views, soon made him favourably known. His “*Histoire de la Révolution*” established his fame; and when, on the appointment of the Polignac ministry in 1829, he (in conjunction with Mignet and Carrel) established the “*National*” news-

paper, with the express object of upsetting them, and pleading the cause of legal and constitutional monarchy against them, he was one of the acknowledged leaders of public opinion in France. The settled aim and plan of the three friends is thus epigrammatically stated by M. de St. Beuve:—“*Enfermer les Bourbons dans la Charte, dans la Constitution, fermer exactement les portes ; ils sauteront inmanquablement par la fenêtre.*” In seven months the work was done—the *coup d'état* was struck; and Thiers was the prominent actor both in that public protestation against the legality of the Ordinances, which commenced the Revolution of July, and in those intrigues which completed it by placing the Duke of Orleans on the throne. Since that date he has been the most noted politician of France—sometimes in office—sometimes in opposition—sometimes, as in February, 1848, bending to the popular storm, and disappearing under the waves—again, as in May, reappearing on the surface, as active and prominent as ever, as soon as the deluge was beginning to subside. Next to M. Guizot, he is unquestionably the statesman of the greatest genius and the most practical ability in France; subtle, indefatigable; a brilliant orator, an inveterate intriguer; skilled in all the arts by which men obtain power; restrained by no delicate scruples from using it as his egotism may suggest; alike unprincipled as a minister, and untruthful as an historian; boundless in the aspirations, and far from nice in the instruments, of his ambition; inspiring admiration in every one, but confidence in no one. Still he is one of the few leading men in France who have a clear perception of what that country needs, and can bear; and if his character had been as high as his talents are vast, he might now have been almost omnipotent.

Guizot is a statesman of a different sort, gifted, perhaps, with a less vivid genius, but with a character of more solid excellence and an intellect of a much

loftier order. He earned his rank by many years of labour in the paths of history and philosophy before he entered the miry and thorny ways of politics, and both as a diplomatist and a minister has shown himself equal to every crisis. Clear, systematic, and undoubting in his opinions, and pertinacious in the promotion of them; stern, cold, and unbending in his manners, with something of the Puritan and much of the Stoic in the formation of his mind, fitted by nature rather for the professor's chair than the turbulent arena of the senate, but "equal to either fortune;" earnestly devoted to the pursuit of truth in philosophic matters, but not always scrupulously adhering to it in the labyrinth of political intrigue; taught by history and knowledge of contemporaneous life to look upon his countrymen with a degree of mistrust and contempt, which his ministerial career too often showed; watching their follies with more of lofty disdain than of melancholy pity, oftener with a sardonic smile than with a Christian sigh, and meeting the most hostile and stormy opposition with a cold and haughty imperturbability; he was, perhaps, the most suitable, but was certainly the most unpopular ruler that France could have had. The stern front which he constantly opposed to any extension of the popular power or privileges, his resolute hostility to the liberalism of the day, was much blamed at the time, and has since been regarded by some as the proximate cause of the Revolution of February, though scarcely, we think, with justice. We are too well aware of the prodigious and unseen obstacles which public men have to encounter, and of the incalculable difficulty of arriving at a just estimate of their conduct in any peculiar circumstances, which is inevitable to all who are not behind the scenes, to be much disposed to condemn the conduct of M. Guizot, on this head, from 1840 to 1848. It was evidently pursued *on system*, and subsequent

events dispose us to think that it may very possibly have been judicious. He seems to have been convinced that the French were not ripe for larger liberties or a wider franchise, and to have resolved to let the education of many years of constitutional monarchy pass over their head before granting them more; and when we remember that the parliamentary reforms of M. Thiers were as promptly and scornfully thrust aside by the leaders of the February revolution, as the conservative policy of his predecessor, we greatly incline to think M. Guizot may have been right. At all events, he acted on a plan, and from conviction; and if his master had trusted him with sufficient confidence, and had displayed half his nerve, the convulsion which agitated and upset all Europe might, we believe, have been easily compressed within the limits of a Parisian *émeute*. It is worthy of remark that the three governments which succeeded, the Provisional Government, the Dictatorship of Cavaignac, and the National Assembly, have all found, or thought, themselves obliged to be far more sternly repressive than ever M. Guizot was. His two works, published since his fall, on "Democracy in France," and on "The Causes of the Success of the English Revolution," display a profound knowledge of the foibles, the wants, and the perils of his countrymen, such as no other French statesman has shown. If he were again at the head of affairs, the experience of the last two years would, we believe, be found to have rendered the French far more competent to appreciate his merits and more disposed to submit to his rule. A *popular* statesman he can never be.

Lamartine was made to be the idol of the French because he was the embodiment of all their more brilliant and superficial qualities. But he was utterly devoid of statesmanlike capacity. His mind and character were essentially and exclusively poetic; for



power and effect as an orator he was unrivalled; and his "Histoire des Girondins" is one of the most splendid and ornate narratives extant in the world. He had much of the hero about him; he was a man of fine sentiments, of noble impulses, of generous emotions, of a courage worthy of Bayard, and greater perhaps than even Bayard would have shown in civil struggles. In the first three days of the Provisional Government, Lamartine was truly a great man: he was exactly the man demanded by the crisis; he had all the qualities those sixty hours of "fighting with human beasts" required; — and it was not till that long agony was passed, and the government, once fairly seated, was called upon to act, that his profound incapacity and ignorance of political science became apparent. No man spoke more ably or more nobly: no man could have acted more madly, weakly, or irresolutely. He sank at once like a stone. From being the admiration of Europe — the central object on whom all eyes were turned, he fell with unexampled rapidity into disrepute, obscurity, and contempt; and the entire absence of dignity, manliness, and sense betrayed in his subsequent writings has been astounding and appalling. The words in which he sums up the characteristics of the old Girondins are precisely descriptive of himself: — "Ils ne savaient faire que deux choses — bien parler, et bien mourir."

The peculiar administrative institutions of France present another obstacle of the most formidable nature to the establishment of a stable republican government in that country. There are two distinct and opposite systems of administration, the municipal or self-governing, and the centralising or bureaucratic; and the degree of real freedom enjoyed by any nation will depend more on the circumstance which of these systems it has

adopted, than on the form of its government or the name and rank of its ruler. The former system prevails in America, in England, and in Norway; the latter is general upon the Continent, and has reached its extreme point in Germany and France. The two systems, as usually understood, are utterly irreconcilable: they proceed upon opposite assumptions; they lead to opposite results. The municipal system proceeds on the belief that men can manage their own individual concerns, and look after their own interests for themselves; and that they can combine for the management of such affairs as require to be carried on in concert. Centralisation proceeds on the belief that men cannot manage their own affairs, but that government must do all for them. The one system narrows the sphere of action of the central power to strictly national and general concerns; the other makes this sphere embrace, embarrass, and assist at the daily life of every individual in the community. Out of the one system a republic naturally springs; or, if the form of national government be not republican in name, it will have the same freedom, and the same advantages as if it were:—out of the other no republic can arise; on it no republic, if forcibly engrafted, can permanently take root; its basis, its fundamental idea, is despotic.

In no country has the centralising system been carried so far as in France. In no country does it seem so suitable to or so submissively endured by the inhabitants. In no country is the metropolis so omnipotent in fashion, in literature, and in politics. In none is provincialism so marked a term of contempt. In none has the minister at the centre such a stupendous army of functionaries at his beck, appointed by his choice, and removable at his pleasure. The number of civil officers under the control of the central government in France is 535,000: in England it is 23,000.

The functions of these individuals penetrate into every man's home and business ; they are cognisant of, and license or prohibit his goings out and comings in, his buildings and pullings down, his entering into, or leaving business, and his mode of transacting it. This system, which in England would be felt to be intolerably meddlesome and vexatious, is (it is in vain to disguise it) singularly popular in France:—it is a grand and magnificent fabric to behold ; it dates in its completeness from the Consulate, when the nation first began to breathe freely after the revolutionary storms ; and amid all the changes and catastrophes which have since ensued, amid governments overthrown and dynasties chased away, no one has made any serious endeavour to alter or even to mitigate this oppressive and paralysing centralisation. It has evidently penetrated into and harmonises with the national character. The idea of *ruling themselves* is one which has not yet reached the French understanding : the idea of *choosing those who are to rule them* is the only one they have hitherto been able to conceive.

Now, this system, and the habits of mind which it engenders, operate in two ways to add to the difficulties of establishing a firm and compact government. In the first place, it deprives the people of all political education ; it shuts them out from the means of obtaining political practice or experience ; it forbids that daily association of the citizens with the proceedings of the government, from which only skill and efficient knowledge is to be derived. In England and in America, every citizen is trained in vestries, in boards of guardians, in parochial or public meetings, in political unions, in charitable societies, in magistrates' conclaves, to practise all the arts of government and self-government on a small scale and in an humble sphere ; so that when

called upon to act in a higher function, and on a wider stage, he is seldom at a loss. This apprenticeship, these normal schools, are wholly wanting to the Frenchman. The establishment of them and practice in them is an essential preliminary to the formation of any republic that can last. The French have been busy in erecting the superstructure, but have never thought of laying the foundation. The following contrast drawn by a citizen of the United States is, in many respects, just and instructive:—

“It has never been denied that political institutions are healthful and durable only according as they have naturally grown out of the manners and wants of the population among which they exist. Thus, the inhabitants of the United States, inheriting from their English ancestors the habit of taking care of themselves, and needing nothing but to be left to the government of their own magistrates, have gone on prospering and to prosper in the work of their own hands. Every state, county, city, and town in America, you need not be told, has always been accustomed to manage its own concerns without application to or interference from the supreme authority at the capital. And this self-controlling policy is so habitual and ingrained wherever the Anglo-Saxon race has spread, that it will for ever present an insuperable obstacle to the successful usurpation of undue authority by any individual. The people of the thirteen original transatlantic states, in the construction of a commonwealth, had only to build upon a real and solid foundation made to hand; but in France the reverse of this was the case when in the last century a republic was proclaimed, and continues so now, without any material diminution of the rubbish, which must be swept away before a trustworthy basis can be found for the most dangerous experiment in a nation's history. The executive power, securely ensconced in central Paris, like a sleepless fly-catcher in the middle of his well-spun web, feels and responds to every vibration throughout the artfully organised system, which extends from channel to sea, and from river to ocean. Its aim has been to keep the departments in leading-strings, and its success to prevent neighbours from

leaning only on each other for mutual aid and comfort in every undertaking great or small, and to drive them to the minister of the interior as the sole dispenser of patronage. Provincialism has hence become naturally associated with social inferiority, sliding easily into vulgarity; and as vulgarity is often carelessly taken for intellectual incapacity, the consequence is, that the many millions living at a distance from the factitious fountain of power are regarded and treated as children, even in matters that most deeply concern their daily comfort. If, for example, a river is to be bridged, a morass drained, or a church erected, more time is lost in negotiating at head-quarters for permission to commence the undertaking than would suffice in England or America to accomplish the same object twice over. Disgusted, doubtless, with all this, and, as too frequently happens, expressly educated by aspiring parents for some official employment, most provincials of distinguished talents, instead of honourably addressing themselves for advancement, as is the custom in the United States, to their own immediate communities, hasten to the feast of good things, whether within the Elysée or elsewhere, at which they soon learn to take care of themselves, leaving their country, as the motto on their current coin has it, to the 'protection of God.'

"No one ought to feel surprised, then, whenever a revolution happens here, and a republic, the universal panacea which haunts the French brain, is announced, that the people out of Paris, utterly destitute of political training, and without leaders, as they are, should stand agape and helpless as a shipload of passengers in a gale whose ruthless violence has left them without captain or crew. Nor should their helplessness and apparent imbecility be a reproach to their natural intelligence, for the system of centralisation, so briefly alluded to above as a curse to the country, has in its long course benumbed their faculties and paralysed their energies for every sort of action beyond the little circle of a material existence. Neither is this system likely to be soon abandoned, the present minister of the interior having very lately, to my certain knowledge, fiercely and firmly resisted every attempt on the part of the Council of State to modify its operation. In the absence, therefore, of the very groundwork whereon to create and sustain a republic, how can such a form of government endure, except while it is kept, as

at present, from toppling over, by the unwilling support of various factions, which preserve it from falling only to prevent an antagonist still more detested from taking its place?"

The second effect of this administrative centralisation is to direct all the active, aspiring, discontented spirit which is always fermenting in the community, upon the originating power in the state. The people are passive as regards the administrators, aggressive as regards the government. They are annoyed or insulted by a policeman or a *sous-préfet*, and they at once, *having no means of direct action upon him, the immediate and subordinate agent*, vent their indignation on the central power. They have no readier way of avenging themselves on an obnoxious prefect than by upsetting the dynasty which appointed him. When they feel themselves oppressed, unprosperous, or suffering, they go at once to that which the system has taught them to regard as the source of all—the regal palace or the ministerial hotel at Paris: they cashier their rulers, but never dream of changing the system of administration, and consequently never mend their position. The evil remains undiminished; the discontent continues; and all that has been learned is the fatal lesson with what astounding facility governments may be overthrown which have no root in the affections, the habits, the wants, or the character of the people. In England, if a policeman affronts us, we bring him before a magistrate; if an overseer or relieving officer disgusts us, we remember it at the next election of guardians; if a tax-gatherer oversteps his powers, we complain to his chief and insist on his dismissal; if refused a hearing we make parliament itself a party to our grievance; if a magistrate acts oppressively we either expose him, or bring an action against him, secure of impartial justice. But no act of injustice or oppression ever weakens our loyalty to Queen or parliament, for we know they are

not responsible for the faults of their subordinates, since they have given us ample means of self-protection against them.

A third reason which renders this central bureaucracy incompatible with any settled and secure government, except a powerful despotism, deserves much consideration. We have already spoken of the great difficulties thrown in the way of the re-organisation of France, by that passion for material wellbeing which is at present so salient a feature in the character of her citizens. These difficulties are enormously enhanced when this material wellbeing is demanded *at the hands of the government*. Yet this demand is one which every Frenchman thinks himself entitled to make; and for generations successive governments have countenanced the claim. By taking out of the hands of the individual the regulation of his own destiny, and teaching him to look up to the abstraction called "The State," for guidance, direction, and support, it has sedulously fostered a habit of expecting everything from this supposed omnipotence, and has effectually trodden out that spirit of humble but dignified self-reliance which is the chief source from which material wellbeing can be derived. It has said to its subjects, to quote the words of one who has read deeply the signs of the times, "Ce n'est point à vous, faibles individus, de vous conserver, de vous diriger, de vous sauver vous-mêmes. Il y a tout près de vous un être merveilleux, dont la puissance est sans bornes, la sagesse infaillible, l'opulence inépuisable. Il s'appelle l'état. C'est à lui qu'il faut vous adresser; c'est lui qui est chargé d'avoir de la force et de la prévoyance pour tout le monde; c'est lui qui devinera votre vocation, qui disposera de vos capacités, qui recompensera vos labeurs, qui élèvera votre enfance, qui recueillera votre vieillesse, qui soignera vos maladies, qui protégera votre famille, qui vous donnera sans



mesure travail, bien-être, liberté.”\* It is not wonderful, then, that the French should have contracted the habit of asking and expecting everything—even impossibilities—from their government; and of urging their claims with the confidence and audacity of “sturdy beggars;”—but picture to yourself a people “passionné pour le bonheur,” and trained to look for this *bonheur* at the hands of a government which has taught them to demand it, but has no power to bestow it, and then ask yourself what chance of success or permanence can a republic so situated have?

Republicanism and bureaucracy are incompatible existences. You may call your state a republic if you will—you may modify its form as you please—you may have two chambers or one—you may place at the head a military dictator, or an elective president holding office for one year, for four years, or for ten;—but so long as the administration of public affairs remains central and bureaucratic, the utmost that full representation or universal suffrage can give you, is the power of choosing the particular set of busy bodies who shall rule you, or rather the irresponsible individual who shall appoint them. It is not liberty, but merely the selection of your head oppressor. Thus France is in a radically false position, and she has not yet found it out; she is endeavouring unconsciously to unite two incompatibilities. Her government has all the finished and scientific organisation of a despotism, with the political institutions which belong to freedom. Each man has a share in the choice of his legislator and his executive chief; each man is the depositary of a calculable fraction of the sovereign power; but each man is the slave of the passport office, the prefect, the gendarme, and the policeman. The republic of to-day

\* Emile Saisset.

may wake and find itself an empire to-morrow—scarcely an individual Frenchman would *feel* the difference—and not one iota of the administration need be changed. As it exists now, it was the child and may be the parent of imperialism. The whole machinery of autocratic rule is at all times ready for the hand of any one who can seize it.

Again: the national traditions of the French as written in their chequered history—the monuments of regal magnificence and splendour, still so cherished and admired, in the Tuileries, at Versailles, and at Fontainebleau—the inextinguishable taste of the people for gorgeous and imposing shows, and their incurable military spirit,—all combine to make the simplicity of a genuine republic unharmonious, grotesque, and out of place among them. It is manifestly an exotic—a transplanted tree of liberty, which nature never intended to grow out of such a soil. The republic, save for a few short years, is associated with no recollections of historic glory: the times which a Frenchman loves to recall are those of Henri Quatre, Louis Quatorze, and Napoleon—none of them names redolent of liberty. The French are, essentially and above all, a military people. Now, unreasoning obedience to a non-elected and non-deposable chief, an utter abnegation of the individual will, which are the soul of success in war, are direct contradictions to the ideas on which democracies are founded. The passion for external luxury and splendour is incongruous and fatal in a democracy, unless that splendour can be shared by all the people; yet in no civilised nations is that passion stronger than in France, and in few is the contrast so great between the palaces of their monarchs (which they still take pride in and adorn), and the habitations of the other classes of the community. In England, where the democratic element is so powerful and so spreading,

there is little difference either in comfort or magnificence between Windsor Castle and Chatsworth, between St. James' Palace and the noble mansion of Longleat. The palaces of our sovereigns, the castles of our nobility, the halls of our wealthy and ancient commoners, are connected by imperceptible gradations; our Queen might take up her abode at the houses of some of our country gentlemen, and scarcely discover any diminution in the comfort of her accommodations, or the splendour of her furniture. But in France this is not so. Her royal palaces may rival or eclipse ours—certainly we have nothing so immense or gorgeous as Versailles—but the chateaux and hotels of her nobles belong to an entirely different and much lower class than ours. She has nothing to represent that class of mansions, which we count by hundreds, of which Devonshire House, Northumberland House, Belvoir Castle, Drayton Manor, Chatsworth, and Longleat, are the type with us. The character of her social hierarchy as depicted in her dwellings is essentially monarchical: ours is essentially aristocratic. Versailles and a republic would be a standing contradiction—a perpetual incongruity and mutual reproach. They represent, and suggest, wholly opposite ideas.

If this article had not already extended to so great a length, we should have dwelt on other difficulties which beset the task of reorganising government and society in France; on those arising from the material condition of her people; from the degree of poverty, incompatible with contentment, in which so large a portion of her population live; from the want of a "career," so painfully felt by many thousands of her most active spirits, and so dangerous to internal peace; from the inadequacy of her protected manufactures, her imperfect agriculture, and her undeveloped commerce, to support in comfort the actual numbers on her soil; from the law

of equal inheritance, with all its fatal and unforeseen consequences to peace, to freedom, to wealth, to social interests, and intellectual culture; and last, not least, from the fatal necessity, which each new government that has sprung from a popular insurrection finds itself under, of turning instantly round upon the parties, the ideas, and the principles which have elevated it to power. A government created by a revolution finds that almost its first task must be to repress revolutionary tendencies; nay more, that it must repress these tendencies far more promptly, more severely, more incessantly, than would be necessary to a government strong in the loyalty of the nation, in the traditions of the past, in the deliberate judgment of the influential classes, and which was not harassed by the spectre of anarchy daily knocking at its gates. Yet such a government—casting down the ladder by which it climbed to office—shutting the door in the faces of undeniable claims—rebuking and punishing the enthusiastic soldiers who had fought for it—imprisoning the friends to whom it owed its existence—fettering and fining the press which had paved the way for its inauguration—has, it cannot be disguised, *primâ facie*, an ugly aspect.

To conclude. The basis of the governments which owed their origin to the first Revolution was reaction against old anomalies; the basis of the Empire was military power; the basis of the Restoration was legitimacy, prejudice, and prestige; the basis of Louis Philippe's government was the material interests of the nation, and the supremacy of the bourgeoisie as the depositaries and guardians of those interests. The Revolution of February—being (as it were) an aggressive negation, not a positive effort, having no clear idea at its root, but being simply the product of discontent and disgust—furnishes no foundation for a government.

Loyalty to a legitimate monarch; deference to an ancient aristocracy; faith in a loved and venerated creed; devotion to a military leader; sober schemes for well-understood material prosperity;—all these may form, and have formed, the foundation of stable and powerful governments: mere reaction, mere denial, mere dissatisfaction, mere vague desires, mere aggression on existing things.—never.

To construct a firm and abiding commonwealth out of such materials, and in the face of such obstacles as we have attempted to delineate,—such is the problem the French people are called upon to conduct to a successful issue. Without a positive and earnest creed; without a social hierarchy; without municipal institutions and the political education they bestow; without a spirit of reverence for rights and of obedience to authority, penetrating all ranks,—we greatly doubt whether the very instruments for the creation of a republic are not wanting. A republic does not create these—it supposes and postulates their existence. They are inheritances from the past, not possessions to be called into being by a fiat. They are the slow growth of a settled political and social system, acting with justice, founded on authority and tradition, and consolidated by long years of unshaken continuance.

## NET RESULTS OF 1848 IN GERMANY AND ITALY.\*

PROBABLY since the fall of the Roman Empire the world has never seen a year so eventful and distracting as 1848. It seemed like a century compressed into a lustrum. Never was there a year so distinguished beyond all previous example by the magnitude and the multiplicity of its political changes — by the violence of the shock which it gave to the framework of European society — by the oscillations of opinion and success between the two great parties in the Continental struggle. Never was there a year so pregnant with instruction and with warning — so rich in all the materials of wisdom both for sovereign and for people — so crowded with wrecks and ruins, with the ruins of ancient grandeur, and the wrecks of glorious anticipations — so filled with splendid promises and paltry realisations, with hopes brilliant and fantastic as fairy-land, with disappointments dismal and bitter as the grave. Thrones, which but yesterday had seemed based upon the everlasting hills, shattered in a day; sovereigns whose wisdom had become a proverb, and sovereigns whose imbecility had been notorious, alike flying from their capitals, and abdicating without a natural murmur or a gallant struggle; rulers, who had long been the

\* From the "North British Review."

1. *Royalty and Republicanism in Italy.* By JOSEPH MAZZINI. London: 1850.

2. *Italy in 1848.* By MARIOTTI. London: 1851.

3. *Taschenbuch der Neuesten Geschichte.* Von ROBT. PRUTZ. Dessau: 1851.

4. *Germany in 1850; its Courts, Camps, and People.* By the Baroness BLAZE DE BURY. London: 1850.



embodiment of obstinate resistance to all popular demands, vying with each other in the promptitude and the extent of their concessions ; statesmen of the longest experience, the deepest insight, the acutest talent — statesmen like Metternich and Guizot — baffled, beaten, and chased away, and reaching their foreign banishment only to turn and gaze with a melancholy and bewildered air on the *écroulement* of schemes and systems of policy the construction of which had been the labour of a lifetime ; eminent men sinking into obscurity, and going out like snuff ; obscure men rising at one bound into eminence and power ; ambitious men finding the objects of their wildest hopes suddenly placed within their grasp ; Utopian dreamers staggered and intoxicated by seeing their most gorgeous visions on the point of realisation ; patriots beholding the sudden and miraculous advent of that liberty which they had prayed for, fought for, suffered for, through years of imprisonment, poverty, and exile ; nations, which had long pined in darkness, dazzled and bewildered by the blaze of instantaneous light ; the powerful smitten with impotence ; the peasant and the bondsman endowed with freedom and unresisted might ; the first last and the last first ; — such were the strange phenomena of that marvellous era, which took away the breath of the beholder, which the journalist was unable to keep pace with, and “ which panting Time toiled after in vain.”

The year opened with apparent tranquillity. In two quarters only of Europe had there been any indications of the coming earthquake ; and to both of these the eyes of all friends of freedom were turned with hopeful interest and earnest sympathy. The first dawn of a new day had arisen in a country where least of all it could have been looked for — in Rome. There, in a state long renowned for the most corrupt, imbecile, mischievous administration of the western world, a new



Pope, in the prime of life, full of respect for his sacred office, and deeply impressed with the solemn responsibilities of his high position, set himself with serious purpose and a single mind, though with limited views and inadequate capacities, to the task of cleansing those Augean stables from the accumulated filth of centuries. He commenced reform — where reform, though most rare, is always the most safe — from above; he purified the grosser parts of the old administrative system; he showed an active determination to put down all abuse, and to give his people the benefit of a really honest government; he ventured on the bold innovation, in itself a mighty boon and a strange progress, of appointing laymen to offices of state: and, finally, he convoked a representative assembly, and gave the Romans a constitution — the first they had seen since the days of Rienzi. His people were, as might have been anticipated, warmly grateful for the gifts, and enthusiastically attached to the person, of their excellent Pontiff; all Europe looked on with delight; Pio Nono was the hero of the day; and everything seemed so safe, so wise, so happy, that we felt justified in hoping that a new day had really dawned upon the ancient capital of the world.

Sicily, too, had about the same time entered upon a struggle to recover some portion of her promised freedom and her stolen rights. Her wrongs had been so flagrant so manifold, so monstrous; the despotism under which she groaned was at once so incapable, so mean, so low, so brutal; her condition was so wretched, and her capabilities so vast, that the sympathies of the world went with her in her struggle with her false and bad oppressor. All ranks of her citizens were unanimous in their resolution of resistance; even the priests, elsewhere the ready tools of tyranny, here fought on the side of the people, and blessed the arms and banners of the reformers; and what was still more remarkable, and

of more hopeful augury, all classes seemed to put mutual jealousies aside, and to be actuated by the same spirit of sincere, self-denying, self-sacrificing patriotism. Their demands were moderate but firm, and so reasonable, that the mere fact of such demands having to be made, was an indelible disgrace to Naples. So far, too, their course had been singularly cautious; they had committed no blunder, they had displayed no sanguinary passion, and no violent excitement, and it was impossible not to hope everything from a contest so wisely conducted, and so unimpeachably just. At length, on the 8th of February, the Sicilians having been everywhere victorious, the preliminaries of an arrangement with the King of Naples were agreed to, on the basis of the constitution of 1812. So far all went well.

In the meantime, excited or warned by the example of the Pope, and the enthusiasm of the Romans, other Italian princes began to move in the path of improvement. The King of Sardinia, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and the King of Naples, promised a constitution to their subjects, and actually took measures for carrying these promises into effect. The excitement soon reached Lombardy; popular movements took place at Milan, but were repressed by the Austrian government with even more than wonted promptitude and severity. Hungary had for some years been making great efforts towards national improvement, and some relaxation of the old feudal privileges, as well as towards a recovery of their old constitutional liberties; but Austria had steadily repressed all such exertions; and a long course of perfidy and oppression had at length so exasperated the Hungarians, and united all parties among them against the common enemy, that it became evident that the contest was approaching to an open rupture.

Such was the position of affairs when the French

revolution of February came like an earthquake, astounding nations, "and, with fear of change, perplexing monarchs." The events which ensued are still fresh in the memory of all men. The democratic party throughout the whole of central Europe burned to follow the example of a movement, the success of which had been so signal and so prompt. The effect was electric; but not everywhere, nor altogether, wholesome. The friends of freedom felt that the time was come to assert their cause, and to claim, without fear of a refusal, the rights so long withheld; while those nations which had already taken some steps towards the attainment of free institutions, and had hitherto deemed their progress rapid and brilliant beyond the most sanguine anticipations, now began to regard it as tardy, *jog-trot*, and inadequate. They looked askance on constitutional monarchy, and began to sigh for a republic. The arrangement between the Sicilians and their sovereign, which had been all but concluded, was broken off, in consequence of an augmentation of the popular demands; while Tuscany, Sardinia, and Rome, began to think their liberal rulers scarce liberal enough. At Berlin, where some tardy steps had at length been taken towards the advent of a constitutional government, the people were anxious to get on faster than the fears or the opinions of the monarch could go with them; an insurrection broke out, and a sanguinary contest of two days' duration desolated the city, and terminated in the scarcely veiled defeat of the crown. This was on the 18th of March. On the 6th, an insurrection took place at Munich, which resulted in the exaction of extensive reforms, and was shortly afterwards followed by the abdication of the king. On the 14th a revolution broke out at Vienna, which ended in the flight of Prince Metternich, and the proclamation of a representative government. On the 19th the Aus-

trians were driven out of Milan, and a provisional government was established in Lombardy. Thus, in a month from the outbreak of the French revolution, the whole of central Europe was revolutionised.

Such is a summary of these astounding events, the like of which were assuredly never crowded into so brief a portion of time. The popular party, — the friends of free institutions and constitutional rule, — everywhere aroused and everywhere triumphant, achieving, with an ease and rapidity which partook of the miraculous, the most decisive victories over the oldest, sternest, rustiest administrative systems of Europe, — were everywhere followed by the sympathy, the admiration, and the prayers of all lovers of humanity, and everywhere strong with the strength which such sympathy must always give.

Where now are all those bright prospects vanished? — which of all those mighty changes have become permanent? — what has been the enduring fruit of all these brilliant victories? — where now are to be found all those fresh, young, sanguine constitutions? With scarcely an exception, everything has fallen back into its old condition. In nearly every state the old demon of despotism has returned, bringing with it worse devils than itself. Hungary and Hesse are crushed; Bavaria has been degraded into the brutal tool of a more brutal tyrant; the Prussian people are sullen, desponding, and disarmed, and the Prussian government sunk into a terrible abyss of degradation; Austria has a new emperor, more insolently despotic than any of his predecessors for many a long year; and throughout Germany constitutional liberty has been effectually trampled out. In Italy, Venice and Lombardy have been reconquered, and are now experiencing the *væ victis*; Tuscany is worse, because more Austrian than before, and alarmed at the peril she has incurred; the small duchies are as

bad as ever — they could not be worse ; the Pope, terrified out of his benevolence and his patriotism, has been restored by foreign arms, and the old ecclesiastical abominations are reinstated in their old supremacy ; while Naples and Sicily are again prostrate at the feet of the most imbecile and brutal of the incurable race of Bourbons. Two short years have passed away since Europe presented to the lover of liberty and human progress the most smiling aspect she had ever worn ; — and in this brief space of time, an inexorable destiny has gathered together all the far reaching anticipations, all the noble prospects, all the rapid conquests, all the rich achievements of that memorable era, and covered them over with these two narrow words — *Hic jacet.*

Even patriots like ourselves, who stood aloof from actual participation in the strife, viewing its vicissitudes with the simple interest of spectators, and who had no personal concern in the issue, might well be disheartened at such tremendous reverses and such extreme reaction. The cup of hope was probably never filled so full, or approached so near to the lips that were *not* to drink it. A victory so nearly gained, and so entirely lost — success so brilliant and complete, followed by failure so disastrous and so crushing — has scarcely ever been recorded in history. But we are too firm believers in human progress to imagine that even in this case the defeat has been as total and thorough as it appears ; nay, we are convinced that in the midst of apparent retrogression there has been actual advance ; that in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the years 1848, 1849, 1850, have not been lost to the onward march of humanity ; that the cause of freedom — though often fought so ill, though stained with some excesses, though tarnished by so many follies, though overshadowed for the moment by so

dark and thick a cloud — has yet on the whole gained by the struggle, and grown stronger, notwithstanding its manifest defeat; and instead, therefore, of lamenting an irrevocable past, or endeavouring to allot to the various parties in the *mêlée* their respective shares in the production of the common failure, we shall do better service by attempting to extract from the confusion of events the *net results*, the residual gain, of these unexampled years.

The progress of humanity is never regular. Freedom and civilisation advance, externally at least, by fitful and spasmodic springs. Their march has been compared to that of the flood-tide, where every wave retires, yet the whole mass of waters moves incessantly and irresistibly onwards. But the similitude is inaccurate, inasmuch as in human progress there is no constant and steady movement, and no inevitable ebb. A more correct likeness may be found in the wave which is slowly but perpetually undermining a vast cliff, covered with buildings and crowded with men, containing monuments which have endured for ages, and results of energetic industry which look forward to ages more. Everything bears the impress of stability, every individual has the conviction of immutable security, save the few who have descended to the base of the cliff and perceived the fearful havoc wrought by the ceaseless and silent toil of their unseen destroyer. No warning sound, no partial sinking of the earth gives timely intimation of the catastrophe which is preparing; — till at length, when the work is complete, and the foundations wholly washed away, an accident, a nothing, a trivial shake, a rolling of distant thunder, gives the needed jar, and the whole structure, with its mighty edifices, its ancient bulwarks, its modern creations, its vivid, teeming, multitudinous life, is engulfed in the destroying sea.

A more exact one still is to be found in the old arithmetical puzzle of our childhood — the snail which climbed up three feet every day, and slipped down two feet every night. The year 1848 was the climbing day; 1849 and 1850 were the backsliding night. Now, in 1851, we can estimate the two together, and calculate roughly how much has on the whole been gained, how much further forward we are than we were in 1847. In a previous Paper we spoke of France; her drama is not yet played out, and its issue and residual phenomenon no man can foresee. At present we shall confine our attention to Germany and Italy — a sad spectacle, but, closely and rightly viewed, by no means a despairing one.

The condition of these two countries when the revolution broke out, presented some interesting points of similarity with each other, and of contrast with France and England, which it is important to notice. In all four countries there was much suffering and much discontent; but the malcontents and the sufferers belonged to different classes in society. In England and in France the lower orders were the chief malcontents; and unquestionably, especially in the latter country, they had much to complain of, and much to endure. Difficulty of obtaining subsistence, actual and severe privation in the present, and no more hopeful prospects for the future, darkened the lot and soured the temper of hundreds of thousands of the people. The more fortunate saw little before them beyond strenuous and ceaseless toil, from early morning till late evening, from precocious childhood to premature decrepitude. The less fortunate often sought toil in vain, dug for it as for hidden treasure, and found it, when obtained, uncertain and unremunerative. A class — often a very numerous class — had grown up among them, whom defective social arrangements had left without any



means of subsistence, beyond habitual crime and the God-send of occasional insurrections.

Nearly all these were more or less uneducated, with passions unsoftened by culture, and appetites sharpened by privation — excitable, undisciplined, and brutal. Such were always ready for any social or political convulsion — prompt to aid and aggravate it, certain to complicate and disgrace it. It is a fearful addition to the perplexities and horrors of a revolution when the mass of the nation are destitute and wretched. Germany and Italy were in a singular measure free from this element of confusion; and in so far their path was wonderfully clear and easy. In Germany the orderly, industrious, and simple habits of the peasantry; the general possession of land by the rural portion of them, especially in the Prussian provinces; the relics of the old distribution of artisans into guilds; the watchful care of the numberless bureaucratic governments to prevent the too rapid increase of this, or indeed of any class; the systematic care of Austria, especially, to keep the lower classes in a state of material comfort; the habit in some states, as Bavaria, of requiring a certificate of property as a preliminary to marriage, — had combined to prevent poverty, except in rare cases, from degenerating into destitution, so that there was, generally speaking, little physical distress or suffering among the mass. The diffusion of elementary education, too, (such as it was, for we are no amateurs of the Continental system in such matters,) prevented the existence of such utterly savage and ignorant masses as were to be met with in France, and unhappily in England also. The same exemption from squalid misery which in Germany was due to care, system, and culture, was bestowed upon the Italians by their genial climate, their fertile soil, and their temperate and frugal habits, so that though there was

often poverty — though poverty, and, as we in England should regard it, poverty of the extremest kind was frequent, and in Rome and Naples almost universal — still, that actual want of the bread of to-day, and that anxiety for the bread of to-morrow, which make men ready for any violence or commotion, were in the greater part of Italy comparatively rare. In Tuscany and Lombardy, more especially, the utterly destitute and starving were a class quite unknown.

In both countries, therefore, the discontented and aspiring class — the makers of revolutions — were the educated and the well-to-do; men whose moral, not whose material, wants were starved and denied by the existing system; men of the middle ranks, who found their free action impeded at every step, whose noblest instincts were relentlessly crushed, whose intellectual cravings were famished by the censorship, and whose hungry and avid minds were compelled daily to sit down to a meal of miserable and unrelished pottage; men of the upper classes, whose ambition was cramped into the pettiest sphere, and forced into the narrowest channels, to whom every career worthy of their energies and their patriotism was despotically closed, who were compelled to waste their life and fritter away their powers in the insipid pleasures of a spiritless society, in metaphysical speculation, or antiquarian research. Hence, with all its faults, the revolution in Germany and in Italy had a far nobler origin, and a loftier character than that of France; it was the revolt, not of starved stomachs, but of famished souls; it was the protest of human beings against a tyranny by which the noblest attributes of humanity were affronted and suppressed; it was the recoil from a listless and unsatisfying life by men who felt that they were made for, and competent to, a worthier existence; it was a rebellion of hearts who loved their country, against a system by

which that country was dishonoured, and its development impeded; it was not the work of passionate, personal, and party aims, but of men who, however wild their enthusiasm, however deplorable their blunders, still set before them a lofty purpose, and worshipped a high ideal.

The *mouvement* party (to borrow an expressive phrase from the French) is composed in different countries of characteristically different materials. The busy exparliamentary reformers; the radicals, who take one grievance or anomaly after another, and agitate and grumble till they have procured its abolition; who have either originated or been the means of carrying each successive measure of reform, are with us almost exclusively composed of the active and practical men of the middle classes — merchants and manufacturers, educated enough to be able to comprehend the whole bearings of the case, but distrusting theory, eschewing abstractions, and too well trained in the actual business of life to be in much danger from disproportionate enthusiasm; shopkeepers and tradesmen, not perhaps masters of the political importance or full scope of the question at issue, but quick to detect its bearing on their personal interests, bringing to its examination a strong, if a somewhat narrow, common sense, observing a due proportion between their means and their ends, and never, in the heat of contest, losing sight of the main chance; — these constitute the centre and the leaders of the movement party in England, and have imparted to all our innovations that character for distinctness of purpose, sobriety of aim, and practicability of result, which has always marked them. — In France the *mouvement* party has been composed of the politicians by profession or by taste; of the amateurs and adventurers of public life; of journalists, who had each their pet crotchet and their special watchword, and

who attained in that country a degree of personal influence which is without a parallel elsewhere; of men to whom the Republic was a passion; of men to whom it was a dream; of men to whom it opened a vista rich in visions of pillage and of pleasure. It was a vast heterogeneous congeries of all the impatient suffering, of all the fermenting discontent, of all the unchained and disreputable passions, of all the low and of all the lofty ambition of the community. In Germany, again, the *mouvement* party was composed, in overwhelming proportion, of the *Burschenschaft*—of students and professors, of young dreamers and their dreaming guides—men qualified beyond all others to conceive and describe a glorious Utopia, but disqualified beyond all others to embody it in actual life. It is curious to observe how everywhere throughout the German revolutions, the collegians were prominent. The students led the struggle at Berlin; the Academic Legion was for some time the ruling body at Vienna; the Frankfurt Assembly was, as “The Times” truly characterised it, “an anarchy of professors.” We do not mean to say, that the revolutionary movement was not joined and sympathised with by numbers in all ranks and classes—though it is important to observe, that from the peculiar system of educational training in Germany, all these had gone through the same discipline, and been subject to the same influences; but the tone of the movement was given, its course directed, and its limit decided, by learned men, whom a life of university seclusion and theoretic studies had precluded from the possession of all practical experience, and by young men fresh from the scenes and the heroes of classic times, and glowing with that wild enthusiasm, that passionate but unchastened patriotism, those visions of an earthly Eden and a golden age, and that unreasoning devotion to everything that bears the name or

usurps the semblance of liberty, which at their age it would be grievous *not* to find. Finally, in Italy, the leaders of the new Reformation were men of as pure and lofty an enthusiasm, but of far finer capacities, and of a sterner and firmer make of mind, but equally untrained in political administration, and with a task beyond their means; — men, not indeed finished statesmen or accurate philosophers, because debarred from that *education of action* which alone can complete the training of the statesman and test the principles of the thinker, — but of the materials out of which the noblest statesmen and the profoundest philosophers are made; — many of them

“Of the canvass which men use  
To make storm stay-sails;”

many of them exhibiting powers for government and war which need only a fairer field to obtain their full appreciation.

It is natural that political changes emanating from bodies so variously constituted as these, should be widely different in their nature and objects, and be crowned with very various degrees of success. In Italy and Germany the patriots had one almost insuperable difficulty to contend with. In both countries the fatal system of bureaucracy had paralysed the energies and dwarfed the political capacities of the people. In Germany they had been ruled like children — in Italy like victims or like vanquished slaves. But in both countries the whole province of administration, even in its lowest branches, had been confided to a separate class, set apart and trained to that profession, and directed and controlled from head-quarters. The people could do nothing except by official permission and under official supervision; long disuse produced inevitable disqualification; long inaction inevitable incapacity; —

till when the crisis arrived, it appeared that the old established functionaries were the only men capable of practical action. When the power was suddenly thrown into the hands of the inexperienced classes, none could be found among them—in Germany at least—competent to use it. In the south of Italy the old functionaries had always been so abominably bad, that even the most incompetent and fresh of the new aspirants could not possibly make worse administrators. But in Germany the fact was as unquestionable as humiliating; and one of the most important lessons inculcated by the time was the utter inadequacy of the best contrived system of national or college education for supplying political training. The lower portion of the middle classes in Germany receive a far more complete and careful education in literary and scientific matters than the same portion with us; and in the instruction of the working classes there is (or was lately) no comparison; yet our municipal councils, our vestry meetings, our boards of guardians, our numberless voluntary associations, form normal schools for statesmen and administrators to which the Continent presents no analogies, and for which unhappily it can furnish no substitutes, and the want of which was most deeply felt in 1848. It may be safely conceded to the advocates of bureaucracy and centralisation in this country, that we pay dearly for our love of self-government in daily extravagance and incessant blunders; but it must also be allowed, after recent events, that the costly experience and capacity thus acquired is cheap at any price.

In speaking, however, thus severely of the incapacity displayed by the Germans for the construction and management of constitutional forms of government, we are bound to particularise one remarkable exception—an exception so signal and instructive as to inspire the most sanguine hopes for the success of the Germans in



this new career, when the next opportunity shall be afforded them of showing how far they have profited by the experience of the past. We allude to the small state of Hesse-Cassel, whose admirable struggle and sad catastrophe well deserve a brief digression. In general, we are too well aware, our countrymen take little interest in the internal concerns of foreign states; but the case of Hesse is so peculiar, so scandalous, and presents so many analogies with the most important and glorious struggles in our own history, that it will need only a short statement of what her constitution was, how it has been crushed, and how it has been defended, to excite in English bosoms the warmest admiration for the unfortunate vanquished, and the sincerest admiration for their firmness, forbearance, noble disinterestedness, and unswerving reverence for law.

The constitution of Hesse-Cassel was granted on the 5th of January 1831, by the father of the present elector. Its date shows its origin. The French revolution of 1830 had awakened in the mind of Frederick-William some fears for the stability of his own throne, and he proffered his subjects a free constitution. The terms were soon agreed upon; and considering the period of excitement in which they originated, they are strangely moderate and fair, and show, on the part of the Hessians, a far more real conception of the essence and the guarantees of freedom than is common among Continental nations. The following are a few of the most important provisions:—

“The representatives are not bound by instructions from their electors, but give their vote in accordance with their duties towards their Sovereign and their fellow-citizens, according to their own judgment, as they hope to answer it before God and their conscience.

“Each representative must take the following oath:—‘I swear to hold sacred the Constitution, and always to have at



heart, in my votes and motions in this Assembly, both the welfare of my Sovereign and that of my fatherland, according to my own conviction, and without allowing myself to be influenced by any other consideration. So help me God.'

"The representatives are elected to act as such for three years. After three years, new elections take place, without any decree to that effect requiring to be issued on the part of the Government. The same persons may be re-elected.

"The Elector calls the representatives together as often as he may think it necessary for the settlement of any important or pressing matters referring to the affairs of the State. They must, however, be called together at least every three years.

"The Elector has the right to adjourn or dissolve the Assembly, but the adjournment is not to last above three months, and in case of a dissolution, the order for new elections has to be issued at the same time.

"All orders and regulations referring to the maintenance or carrying out of any of the existing laws shall emanate from the Government alone. The Government can also, during the time the Assembly is not sitting, on the request of the respective heads of the ministerial departments, and with the co-operation of the permanent committee, pass such exceptional measures as the already existing laws may not provide for, but which they may consider necessary for the security of the State, or for the maintenance of the public peace. After such measures have been passed, the representatives shall, on the requisition of their committee, be called together without delay, in order that their sanction to such measures may be obtained.

"Previous to a dissolution or adjournment of the Assembly taking place, the members have to elect a committee of three or five of their own number, not only to watch the carrying out of the measures or laws passed by the Assembly, and take care of its interest, but also to act in accordance with the instructions they may have received from the Assembly, and the provisions of the Constitution. The majority of this committee shall neither consist of officers of Government nor of those holding appointments at Court.

"The head of each ministerial department has to countersign any decree or regulation referring to his department issued by the Elector, and is held personally responsible for the contents

being strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and the laws of the country. As regards any decrees or regulations which have reference to more than one or the whole of the Government departments, they have to be countersigned, jointly, by the respective heads of each department, each being held personally responsible for his own department.

"All Government officers shall be held responsible for their acts, and any one guilty of a violation of the Constitution, *particularly by carrying out any decree not issued in a strictly constitutional form*, shall be proceeded against before the competent legal authorities. The representatives have the right, and are bound to proceed before the High Court of Appeal, against any of the heads of the Government departments who may be guilty of a violation of the Constitution. Should the accused be found guilty, he is dismissed, and can no longer hold office.

"Beginning with the year 1831, *no direct or indirect taxes can be levied, either in war or peace, without the sanction of the Assembly*. For this purpose an estimate, stating the probable income and cost of the Government, with the greatest possible accuracy and completeness, must be laid before the Assembly. The necessity or desirableness of the different estimates must be shown; *the different departments of the Government are bound to furnish the Assembly with any information in their possession which may be required*.

"All Government decrees relating to the collection of taxes shall state particularly that such taxes are levied with the consent of the Assembly, without which it shall not be lawful for any collector to collect such taxes, nor are the people bound to pay them."

To this constitution the Hessian representatives, the civil and military functionaries, and the Elector himself, solemnly swore allegiance. So sensible, so moderate, so little democratic was it, though framed at a time when most extravagant ideas of freedom were fermenting throughout Europe—so scrupulously did it confine itself to those two essential provisions, without which all political freedom is a mockery, (*viz.*, establishing the supremacy of law, and securing it to the representatives of the people the sole power of taxation,)

that it caused considerable disappointment to the extreme party. Moderate as it was, however, the ink was scarcely dry with which the Elector had signed his name to it, before he began a series of covert stratagems to undermine the liberties which he had sworn to maintain inviolate; and, with the help of the same Hasenflug, who has since earned such an unenviable notoriety as prime minister in one country, and as prisoner, on a charge of forgery, in another—he had nearly succeeded in reducing the constitution to a mere name, when the revolution of February broke out in Paris, and frightened him back into decency and law. As cowardly as he was false, he immediately issued a proclamation announcing his intention to govern in future in a really legal and popular spirit, and gave a ready sanction to a number of salutary reforms. The result was that Hesse-Cassel remained perfectly tranquil during the revolutionary furor which deluged and desolated the rest of Germany in 1848 and 1849; and with a forbearance and magnanimity which has met with a black requital, the people refrained from availing themselves of the power which that season of excitement put into their hands, to extort from their perfidious prince any additional securities, or more extended rights.

But the Elector was not a man to whom forbearance could be safely shown. He belonged to that class of sovereigns who have been described as “the opprobria of the southern thrones of Europe—men false alike to the accomplices who have served them, and the opponents who have spared them—men who, in the hour of danger, concede everything, promise everything, turn their cheek to every smiter, give up to vengeance every minister of their iniquities, and await, with meek and smiling implacability, the blessed day of perjury and proscription.” As soon as the prevalence of the re-

actionary spirit of 1850 made it safe, Hasenflug (who had been obliged to retire in 1837) re-appeared in the Council-chamber, detested from old recollections, and loaded with recent infamy. He returned with the express mission of trampling down the constitution, and lost no time in setting about his task. In direct violation of clause 144. he demanded a vote of money from the Chamber, but proposed no budget, and insolently refused all explanation of the purposes to which the money was to be applied. The Chamber did its duty, and refused the vote. Hasenflug then dissolved the Chamber, and, in violation of clause 146., issued a decree ordering payment of the unvoted taxes. The Supreme Court of Appeal pronounced the decree illegal. The people, confident in the sense and patriotism of the civil authorities, remained stubbornly and provokingly tranquil, notwithstanding many sinister attempts to goad them into some uproar which might serve as a pretext for more violent proceedings. The Elector, however, issued a proclamation, placing the whole country under martial law, and directing the press to be silenced, and the taxes to be levied by force. The Supreme Court of Appeal immediately issued a counter proclamation, pronouncing all these transactions unconstitutional and illegal, and impeaching the general officer (Bauer) who had accepted the office of carrying them out. General Bauer resigned, and the Elector and his minister fled, baffled, dishonoured, and derided.

From his place of refuge the Elector appointed a new commander-in-chief, General Haynau, with unlimited powers. It now became necessary for the Hessian army to decide upon their course. They had to decide between their country and their oath on the one side, and their habits of military obedience on the other. The officers consulted together, and then waited on the General, and informed him that he might depend upon

them only so far as was consistent with the oath they had been required to give to uphold the constitution intact. He gave them the choice between obedience or throwing up their commission: they chose the latter alternative almost to a man. He then took the step, quite without a precedent in Germany, of offering commands to the non-commissioned officers: they unanimously refused to accept them. The army was thus paralysed, the press was silenced, the journals seized, the courts suspended, but the people remained resolute and passive; they simply did nothing, and by this attitude embarrassed the Elector far more than the most active resistance could have done. The taxes were still uncollected, for the financial *employés*, pointing to clause 146., refused to collect any which had not been legally imposed. The Elector was baffled by the pure inability to find among his own subjects a sufficient number of agents, either civil or military, base and unpatriotic enough to carry out his nefarious designs. With the exception of a few among the upper classes, the resistance and the virtue were strictly *national*.

Under these circumstances he applied to Austria for assistance to reduce his subjects to obedience; and the Emperor, too happy to have an opportunity of interference, marched a body of Austrian and Bavarian troops into Hesse, and took military possession of the Electorate. Prussia, as usual, blustered, threatened, and gave way, leaving the unhappy Hessians to the tender mercies of an ill-disciplined and hostile soldiery.

These troops—the army of execution, as they were called—have entirely eaten up the resources of the Electorate. They were billeted on the refractory *employés*, till they either resigned or gave in their adherence to the illegal decrees of the Elector. Few have been found to do the latter. Judges of the Supreme Court had fifteen to twenty Bavarian brutes

quartered on their families, with a threat of an additional number each day, if they would not resign their functions to more compliant successors. The members of the Town-council, in addition to this, were menaced with a court-martial and corporal punishment, if they would not declare (which as men of conscience it is impossible they could) that the decree of martial law was in accordance with the constitution. Individuals of every class, rich and poor, were oppressed and extortionised in the same brutal manner, and daily subjected to all the indignities which could be offered to them by a coarse and savage soldiery, whose express duty was to make them as miserable as they could, for the sake of more promptly reducing them to submission.

Such is a brief outline of the Hessian tragedy;—such the deliberate abolition by foreign force of a constitution like our own;—such the treatment of a people who have shown that they knew how both to value and to use their rights, and whose conduct will lose nothing by a comparison with that of the constitutional heroes of our own country—the goodly fellowship of our political reformers—the noble army of our civil martyrs. Its consequences will probably be far wider and more serious than might, at first sight, seem likely to ensue from a mere piece of cruel tyranny on the part of a petty sovereign of central Europe. There exists an element of revolutionary disturbance in Germany which deserves far more attention than it has hitherto received, which is fraught with menace not only to the present order of things, but to monarchy *per se*,—a source of strength to the people, and of weakness and danger to the princes, and which no mere political reaction, no mere military oppression, can put down. The Germans are, on the whole, especially the middle classes, a sincere, loyal, virtuous, and reverential people. They are attached to all the homely and substantial excellences of



character. They love truth and honesty; they value the decorums and respectabilities of life; and they are naturally disposed to respect, even to enthusiasm, the authority of rank and grandeur. But this disposition and habit of reverence has of late been rudely shaken, and is now entirely rooted out. As they look round upon their princes and rulers, they can find but few who are worthy of respect, either for capacity, truthfulness, or propriety of private character. Many of those who are placed in hereditary authority over them, are persons whom no man of sense could converse with without despising—whom no honest man could trust in the common transactions of life—whom no man of correct morals would willingly admit into his family. The secret—sometimes the notorious—history of many of their courts for the last forty years has been a tissue of oppression, duplicity, and profligacy. Putting aside the King of Hanover—of whom, wishing to say no evil, we shall of necessity say nothing at all—and the kings of Prussia, the late as well as the present, whose perfidious conduct can find its only excuse in the supposition of impaired capacities—the present virtual rulers of Austria, Prince Schwartzemberg and the Archduchess Sophia, are persons whose private character will bear no examination, and whose scandalous chronicle is well known upon the Continent;—the old King of Bavaria made himself the disgrace and ridicule of Europe, by his open and vagabond amours;—while the Elector of Hesse-Cassel is a man whose profligacy has set at nought all the bounds of secrecy and decorum, and whose personal honour is stained, in addition, with proceedings worthy only of a low-lived sharper. Yet this is the very prince for whose pleasure a noble and high-spirited people have been subjected to military outrage, to restore whose despotic authority a free constitution like that of England has been violated and annulled;



and Austria and Bavaria, sharers in his impurities, have been the chosen and willing instruments in this high-handed oppression. We cannot wonder that all this has spread an anti-regal spirit in Germany, which will one day—probably an early day—bring bitter fruits; and when we remember that it has needed all the honest benevolence of William IV., and all the spotless purity and domestic virtues of Victoria, to enable the loyalty of Englishmen to recover from the shock it received from the contrasted conduct of their predecessor, we may form some conception of the state of feeling among a people like the Germans, who, wherever they turn their eyes, can see nothing above them to love, reverence, or trust. “Spiritual wickedness in high places” has dissipated the *prestige* which should “hedge in” greatness, and hallow rank and rule; there is growing up among them a deep-rooted conviction that the royal races are incurably bad, untrustworthy, and incapable; and in the very next period of disturbance or political enthusiasm like 1848, the consequences of this conviction will be too plainly seen.

Another sad and dangerous opinion which the transactions in Hesse have impressed upon the German mind is this:—that no moderation in a free constitution, and no forbearance or strict adherence to law and written contract on the part of those who enjoy it, will be any guarantee of safety, or any protection against the enmity of those courts to whom *any* degree or form of liberty is an eye-sore, an abhorrence, and a reproach. The destruction of the Hessian constitution is a declaration of war against freedom *in the abstract*. The reaction in many states against the democratic proceedings in 1848 has some excuse, and met with some sympathy, even from the liberal European states, because the popular party had neither used their victory with wisdom, nor confined it within the bounds of mode-

ration; but the violation and forcible suppression of the Hessian constitution, which had no fault except that it *was* free, and which contained no more freedom than was necessary to make its provisions a reality and not a mockery, and the tyrannical treatment of the Hessian people, who had committed no definable offence, and had been guilty of no disturbance which could afford even a pretext for the use of force against them, have proclaimed too clearly the code and creed of the despotic princes of Germany, and the principles on which their course will henceforth be guided, — viz., that no semblance of a free constitution shall raise its head within the limits of their influence — that the object of their dread is not popular excess but popular rights — that it is not radicalism or republicanism against which they wage implacable and interminable war, but liberty *as such*, liberty in the most moderate degree, liberty in the most unobjectionable form. A more perilous, demoralising, revolutionary lesson could not have been taught to the German people, nor one which, when the day of opportunity arrives, will recoil with more fearful retribution on the heads of its foolish and fanatical propounders.

After this account of the destruction of the only really free constitution which Germany could boast of previously to 1848, it may seem paradoxical to say that we are deliberately of opinion that the cause of liberty and progress has on the whole been a gainer by the events of that year, in spite of the extensive and general subsequent reaction. The superficialities of European society speaks only of retrogression: but a somewhat deeper and more careful glance will discover many indications which point to a very different conclusion. A few of the more prominent of these we shall endeavour concisely to enumerate.

I. The gain to freedom has been immense — and such

as can be cancelled by no subsequent contradictory occurrences — in the discovery of the first fact which the Spring of 1848 proclaimed so emphatically to the world, of the utter hollowness of the apparently solid and imposing structure of European policy, of the internal rottenness of what had looked to the common eye so stable and so sound, of the intrinsic weakness of what had seemed externally so strong. To a few observers, indeed, keener and profounder than the rest, to a few statesmen like Metternich\*, — whose long ex-

\* The profound sagacity of this remarkable man was never more shown than in the accuracy with which he read the signs of the times in the last few years which preceded his downfall. With the gallant resolution of a man of distinct and unshaken purpose, he had conscientiously adhered through life to the principles and ideas of a past age; and our conviction of the entire erroneousness of his aims cannot blind us either to his admirable consistency, his dignified firmness, or his lofty powers. He was a statesman of the order of Richelieu: he knew exactly what he wanted, what he deemed best for his country, and how best to obtain it. But he was at variance with the spirit of the age, and lived a century too late. Still he struggled on. For a long while he trusted that the deluge of democracy which he foresaw could be stayed during his lifetime. But latterly even this hope had deserted him. In the Autumn of 1848, we have the following account of his feelings from the pen of M. von Usedom, a Prussian diplomatist: — "From my personal knowledge I can testify, that he foresaw with absolute certainty the great shipwreck of last Spring (1848). He spoke to me much at length of the political ruin which threatened to fall on Europe soon, perhaps very soon, and of the even deeper growth and wider range of radical and communistic ideas, against which means of repression had proved ineffectual. I could not at that time believe that things had gone so far; but rather thought that the age would take counsel from these events, and learn prudence from the failure of such a policy. 'I am no prophet,' said the Prince, 'and I know not what will happen: but I am an old practitioner, and I know how to discriminate between curable and fatal diseases. This one is fatal: here we hold as long as we can, but I despair of the issue.'" Mazzini gives, in his work, some curious extracts from Metternich's diplomatic correspondence, showing how much more truly he read the course of events than the generality of politicians, of whatever section.

perience, vigilant sagacity, and native instinct, enabled them to pierce below the surface of society, and discern all that was feeble in its seeming strength, all that was unreal in its superficial prosperity, all that was boiling beneath its smooth tranquillity—a suspicion of the truth may have presented itself. But the astounding facility with which revolution after revolution was effected: the feeble pusillanimity with which monarch after monarch succumbed without a struggle or a stroke; the crash with which throne after throne went down at the first menace of assault, like the walls of Jericho before the mere blast of hostile trumpets; the instantaneousness with which institutions of the oldest date crumbled away at the first touch of the popular arm, — betrayed at once to the rulers the secret of their weakness, and to the people the secret of their strength, and inculcated a pregnant lesson which will not be forgotten by either party. Paris, Berlin, Venice, Lombardy, Munich, Turin, Florence, Naples, and Rome — all revolutionised within a month, and all by independent and internal movements, without concert and without co-operation — showed how ripe for revolt every country must have been, and how ludicrously feeble must have been the power which had been feared so long. The moral influence of such events can never be got over or forgotten; the *prestige* of power is gone; some leaves fall off every time the tree is shaken; and authority, once so rudely handled and so easily overthrown, can never resume its former hold upon the mind. Those who have learned how impotent before the fury of an aroused people are all the weapons and array of despotism, will never dread that despotism as they did before; and those who have felt

“The moral that slumbers in a peasant’s arm,”

will live in perpetual fear lest it should be again awakened. For a while the wrath of terror may excite

monarchs to make a savage use of their recovered power, but this will only be for a time: they have learned the resistless force of their subjects, when once put forth, too recently, not to make them timid and cautious in again arousing it. They know now that they hold their power only on the tenure of a people's forbearance, and that that forbearance will give way if strained too far. On the other hand, the people who have once, by one great single effort of volition, brought their rulers to their feet, and seen how human, how feeble, how pusillanimous they were, will, in oppression and defeat, remember the events of 1848 as the proof of their own inherent strength, and the earnest of a future day of more signal and enduring triumph.

II. Again: when it came to actual war, in two cases at least, the people proved stronger than their masters. It became evident either that disciplined armies were not altogether to be relied upon, or that there was something in national determination which even disciplined armies could not make head against. In Hungary and in Rome the cause of freedom showed itself mightier and more stubborn in arms than the cause of despotism. In Hungary, notwithstanding all the difficulties arising from divided nationalities, and the crippling errors of the only just abolished feudalism, the people made head against the whole force of Austria, gained ground month by month, and were morally certain of a complete and final victory, when the aid of Russia was called in, and, in an evil hour for Europe, granted and permitted. Even then the result was doubtful, till aided by internal treachery. That is, it required the combined efforts of the two great empires of Russia and Austria to conquer the Hungarian people. Hungary, single-handed, was more than a match for the whole Austrian empire single-handed. If the prompt and vigorous interference of England, France,

and Prussia had forbidden, as it easily might have done, the intervention of Russia, how different now would the whole aspect of Europe have been! The whole subsequent oppressions and insolences of the Viennese Court would have been prevented. With Hungary triumphant and independent, Austria could not have bullied Prussia, could not have trampled on the constitution of Hessê, could not have conquered Venice, could not have retained even though she had recovered Lombardy, could not have given France even the paltry and miserable pretext for that attack on Rome which has covered both her arms and her diplomacy with indelible infamy. The permission of the interference of Russia was the one great glaring mistake of the time, — the *teterrima causa* of the subsequent reaction, and the present prostration of Continental liberty. *Why* it was permitted by the three great powers, is a question which we fear admits, in the case of two of them at least, of no reputable answer. It is alleged that England's repeated interventions in favour of the constitutional cause in Spain and Portugal deprived her of any just claim to protest against a corresponding intervention by an absolute monarch in favour of absolutism in the case of an allied power. But France could be withheld by no such consideration, and her sympathy and her interest lay in the same direction, viz., in crippling the power of Austrian despotism. Prussia by herself could do little; and whatever were the sentiments of the Prussian nation, the Prussian Court was never itself desirous of the triumph of liberty in any quarter.

In Lombardy, the cause of independence was lost from causes which had no relation to its intrinsic strength. There can, we think, be little doubt that the people who, by no sudden surprise, but by five days' hard and sustained fighting, had driven the ablest warrior and the picked soldiers of Austria out of Milan



and to the borders of the Alps, would, if left to themselves, have completed their victory and made good their ground. But it is impossible to read Mazzini's and Mariotti's account of the war, without admitting that the cause never had fair play from the beginning. Charles Albert joined the Lombards from pure dread of a republic so near him being followed by a republic in his own territories; he fought therefore gallantly and well, but he fought for his own personal ambition, and to prevent the Lombard republicans from fighting, and his great anxiety throughout was to gain the campaign without their aid. The republicans, on the other hand, mistrusted the king, and were little disposed to shed their blood for the aggrandisement of a dynasty which they had little reason to respect or love: and thus the real cause of Italian independence was compromised and paralysed at the very outset by mutual and well-grounded mistrust.\* Still enough remains, and enough was done, to show what might have been done, and what may be done again, if either the monarchical party would abstain from encumbering the republicans with aid, or if a monarch would arise whom even the republicans would fight for, and could trust. Enough was done to show how simple the condition, and how practicable the combinations, by which the battle may be won.

In Rome, too, when the people and their sovereign were pitted singly against each other, the victory was not for a moment doubtful. The Pope was powerless—the people were omnipotent; and this, though they, a Catholic and superstitious people, had to fight against spiritual terrors as well as temporal arms. The Pope

\* One of the most melancholy features of Mazzini's book is the rooted mistrust he displays towards the moderate party, whose sincerity and capacity he seems entirely unable to admit. It is an ill omen for the Italian cause when a man like Mazzini is unable to appreciate a man like Azeglio.



fled, and was not missed. His return was, indeed, formally asked for; but a republic was organised without him, and, for the first time, the Romans had a glimpse of what good government might be. It was reserved for a foreign, a friendly, and a republican government again to interfere, and deprive a people of the opportunity of showing how well they could use, and how well they had deserved their freedom. France, which had just chased away her own sovereign, which had just established her own republic, which had just proclaimed the inalienable right of every nation to choose its own rulers, and work out its own emancipation — France was not ashamed to interfere to crush a sister democracy, on the most flimsy, transparent, and inadequate pretext ever urged to palliate a flagrant crime. France, noted throughout the world as the least religious nation in Christendom, was not ashamed to be made the instrument of replacing on the necks of a free people the yoke of the most corrupt priesthood and the narrowest creed that Christendom ever saw. France, with her 40,000,000 of people, and her army of 500,000 men, was not ashamed to attack a state only just emerged from slavery, and a city garrisoned only by a few thousand untrained and inexperienced soldiers, and *was kept at bay for weeks*. The nineteenth century has registered no blacker deed within its annals! The recording angel of the French nation, in all her stained and chequered history, has chronicled nothing worse!

Hungary and Rome, then, had cast off the yoke by their own unaided efforts; and their masters, by their own unaided efforts, were powerless to replace it. If the revolutionary years had brought to light no other fact, this alone would have been worth all their turmoil and their bloodshed. The sovereigns of these people at least reign only by the intervention of foreign mercenaries. The Pope is a French proconsul; and the

Emperor of Austria is a vassal who does homage for his territories to the Czar of Russia. The people are no longer slaves to their own rulers, whom they had conquered and expelled. They are simply prisoners of war to a foreign potentate.

III. It is impossible that so many experiments should have been tried, and so many mistakes made, so many failures incurred, so many catastrophes brought about, without leaving much sad but salutary wisdom behind them. Those who were concerned as actors in the events of 1848, and those who regarded them merely as spectators, will, by subsequent reflection, be able to elicit from them much guidance for the future. It was the first time that the popular party, in Germany at least, went fairly and *practically* to school. It was their first attempt in organisation and administration, and its lessons cannot have been altogether lost. It may at least be hoped that the *same* mistakes will not be made in future, that in their next voyage they will avoid shipwreck on the same rocks. It would lead us into too protracted a digression were we to attempt a specification of their errors and their faults; two only of the principal ones we can briefly indicate. In the first place, the want of definite purpose and of moderate boundary, which generally distinguishes popular movements, was early and almost universally apparent. The patriots seldom knew exactly what they wanted, and seldomer still, knew exactly where to stop. Up to the month of May, success and sympathy had everywhere gone with the insurgents. But about that time, it began to be painfully manifest how defective was their wisdom; how imperfect their conception of their cause and their position; how ignoble and impure were often the motives which actuated their leaders; and how completely the sober, the moderate, and the honest were everywhere outbid by the selfish, the ignorant,

and the violent — by men whose ambition was restrained by no principle, and whose measures were guided by no reflection — the demagogue by nature, the rebel by temperament, the malcontent by misery, the *émeutier* by profession. One blunder was followed by another still more serious and criminal; one leader was cashiered to be replaced by another of a deeper colour and a lower stamp; checks and reverses succeeded one another, but seemed to inspire only desperation — not wisdom, nor repentance and retractation; till throughout Europe the constitutional cause seemed not so much defeated as dishonoured, betrayed, and thrown away.

In every country, the friends of movement committed precisely the same series of blunders. They had not yet learned the lesson now taught them, we trust, alike by the successes and the failures of that memorable year — that concessions wrung from sovereigns form the surest basis of a nation's freedom — that it is only by making the most of these, by consolidating and using them, not by pushing them to excess, that constitutional liberty is secured; and that to push victory so far as to drive away the sovereign, is, in nine cases out of ten, to resign themselves, bound hand and foot, to the dictation of the mob. They became excited instead of being contented with the vast concessions they had won; —

“ Nil actum reputans dum quid superesset agendi,”

they grasped at more, in place of employing and securing what they had. They showed by their attitude their proposals, and their language, that they were neither intellectually nor morally *masters of their position*; they were not educated up to the requirements of their new station; their minds could not rise to a full comprehension of its duties, nor their consciences to a clear comprehension of its responsibilities; they alarmed

where they should have soothed, disgusted where they should have conciliated (and, alas! conciliated and temporised where they should have repressed), dared where they should have shrunk, and, "like fools, rushed in where angels fear to tread." They did not understand the business, nature, and limits of constitutional freedom. They committed the fatal error — in their position so difficult to avoid — of tolerating and encouraging even, rather than suppressing, popular turbulence and mob-dictation — of relaxing the arm of the law at the very moment when its strength and its sternness required to be most plainly felt. By these errors and deficiencies they signed the death-warrant of their own ascendancy, by convincing the wise and patriotic that liberty was not safe with them; the proprietary body that property was not safe with them: the commercial classes that credit was not safe with them.

In the spring of 1848 there were at least five constituted representative assemblies, sitting in their respective countries, as democratic in their composition as could well be desired, — at Paris, Berlin, Frankfort, Vienna, and Naples. Of the last we shall say nothing, because it had little real action, and we know little of the elements which composed it: but the others were elected by universal suffrage, or nearly so, and presented as motley and miscellaneous an assemblage as could be imagined. Every rank, every class, every passion, every prejudice, every desire, every degree of knowledge and of ignorance, was there faithfully mirrored. Exclusiveness was the only thing excluded. Two of the German assemblies comprised, we believe, upwards of sixty *bonâ fide* peasants each. Here surely, if ever, was the means presented of trying advantageously the great experiment of a popular yet constitutional rule. Yet in every case the experiment failed, and in every case from the same error. These popular

assemblies all lost themselves and discredited their cause by the same grand mistake, of stepping beyond their appropriate and allotted province, and usurping functions that did not belong to them. Nowhere do they seem to have understood with any precision the nature of their duties, or the limits of their powers. Where they were *constituent* assemblies, they encroached on the province of permanent legislation; where they were *legislative* bodies, they endeavoured to assume the functions of the executive. Their whole history was one pertinacious effort to concentrate in their own hands all the powers of the state; and in the course of their attacks on the executive (though we are far from saying that they were always indefensible or without valid grounds for mistrust), they contrived, by demands which no rulers with the least comprehension of, or respect for, their own position could dream of conceding, to put themselves so completely in the wrong that public sympathy had deserted them long before their fall.

The second mistake, to which we have referred as committed by the friends of freedom in 1848, was the mixing up of two objects, wholly distinct in themselves, and of which the desirableness was by no means equally clear,—constitutional rights and national unity. Both in Italy and Germany, instead of concentrating their efforts on the attainment of free institutions for each separate state, they complicated their cause, and distracted and weakened their party, by raising the standard of freedom and that of unity at the same time. Each object was gigantic in itself; the two together were nearly hopeless. Representative assemblies, a free press, an open administration of justice, were boons which every one could appreciate, and which every one was willing to fight for. The creation of one great state out of the various nationalities of Italy and Germany, respectively, was a dream of enthusiastic theorists,

and however important or beneficial it might ultimately have proved, it was not universally desired, and it was surrounded with difficulties which, if not insuperable, demanded at least a peaceful era and a patient incubation for their solution. Many states were by no means willing to merge their distinct individualities for the very questionable equivalent of forming inadequate or inappreciable portions of one unwieldy nationality. How could reasonable men hope that the mutual jealousies, differences, and respective claims of Prussia, Austria, Bavaria, Hanover, and Wurtemberg, in one quarter, or of Naples, Rome, Florence, Piedmont, and Lombardy, in another, could be harmonised and reconciled by a constitution struck out at a heat? Moreover, it might well be doubted whether the fusion of so many states into one great and powerful empire, however desirable as an object of European policy, would contribute to the wellbeing of the constituent elements. Hear what Goethe says on this point:—

“I am not uneasy about the unity of Germany; our good highroads and future railroads will do their part. But, above all, may Germany be one in love, one against the foreign foe. May it be one, so that dollars and groschen may be of equal value through the whole empire; so that my travelling chest may pass unopened through all the six-and-thirty states. May it be one in passports, in weight and measure, in trade and commerce, and a hundred similar things, which might be named. But, if we imagine that the unity of Germany should consist in this, that the very great empire should have a single capital, and that this one great capital would conduce to the development of individual talent, or to the welfare of the mass of the people, we are in error.

“A state has justly been compared to a living body, with many limbs; and the capital of a state may be compared to the heart, from which life and prosperity flow to the individual members near or far. But, if the members be very distant from the heart, the life that flows to them will become weaker and weaker. Whence is Germany great, but by the admirable



culture of the people, which equally pervades all parts of the kingdom? But does not this proceed from the various seats of government? and do not these foster and support it? Suppose we had had, for centuries past, in Germany, only the two capitals, Berlin and Vienna, or only one of these, how would it have fared with German culture? or even with that generally diffused opulence which goes hand in hand with culture? Germany has about twenty universities, distributed about the whole empire, and about a hundred public libraries, similarly spread. How does France stand with regard to such?

“And now, think of such cities as Dresden, Munich, Stuttgart, Cassel, Weimar, Hanover, and the like; think of the great elements of life comprised within these cities; think of the effect which they have upon the neighbouring provinces,—and ask yourself if all this would have been so if they had not for a long time been the residence of princes. Frankfort, Bremen, Hamburg, and Lubeck, are great and brilliant; their effect upon the prosperity of Germany is incalculable. But would they remain what they are if they lost their own sovereignty, and became incorporated with a great German kingdom as provincial towns?”\*

The great axiom of political wisdom which we trust the friends of liberty and progress will have learned from the events of 1848 is this, that constitutional freedom must be gained by degrees, not by one desperate and sudden snatch. People must be content to conquer their political and civil rights step by step, as not only the easiest and surest, but in the end the speediest way. Their true and safe policy is to accept and make the most of all concessions which either a sense of danger or a sense of justice may dictate to their rulers; to remember that these, small though they may seem to one party, probably seem great to the other, and may have cost harder efforts of self-sacrifice than we can well appreciate,—and that, at all events, they are much as compared with the past; to use them diligently but

\* Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann, vol. ii. p. 104.



soberly, as not abusing them; to grow familiar with them; to become masters of them; to acquire, by constant practice, dexterity in the use of them; to consolidate and secure the possession of them; and then to employ them gradually, and as opportunity shall serve, as the stepping-stone to more;—but never, save in the last extremity, to supersede or weaken the executive authority, or to call in the mob. Any attempt on the part of the people to snatch, in the hour of victory, more than they know how to wield, more than they can use well, is a retrograde and fatally false step; it is in fact playing the game of their opponents. If they employ their newly acquired rights and institutions in such a manner as to show that they do not understand them and cannot manage them, and that, therefore, public tranquillity and social security are likely to be endangered by the mistakes of their excitement and inexperience, the great body of sober and peaceful citizens are quick to take alarm, and carry back the material and moral weight of their sympathies to the side of the old system. Their *feeling*, when expressed in the articulate language of a principle, is simply this—and it is just and true:—all wise and educated people will prefer a free to a despotic government, *ceteris paribus*, i. e., *order and security being predicated in both cases*: but the worst theoretical government which assures these essential predicates, will be, and ought to be, preferred to the best theoretical government which endangers them. The majority of the sober and influential classes will always be found on the side of that party which best understands *the practical act of administration*, however defective or erroneous may be its fundamental principles, however medieval may be its name. If the year 1848 has taught this truth to the movement party, the cause of rational freedom will have gained incalculably by its first disasters.

IV. It is not to be denied that the character of the Italians stands far higher in the eyes of Europe than it did before 1848. The various nations of the Peninsula came out of that fierce ordeal with a reputation for bravery, for sustained enthusiasm, for pure devoted patriotism, for capacity of self-government, such as they never before enjoyed. Their conduct in 1848 was of a nature to redeem all their previous failures and miserable exhibitions. It is true that the Lombards, whatever be the true explanation of their supineness, did nothing to fulfil the promise of their first brilliant exploit. It is true that the Sicilians, by a strange fatality of mismanagement, lost all the liberty for which they had fought so ably and so gallantly, and which they had so nearly won. Still the expulsion of Radetsky, and the entire defeat of Ferdinand, showed capacities for which neither Milan nor Palermo could have previously gained credit. Both the Piedmontese regulars and the Roman and Tuscan volunteers distinguished themselves by a steady and determined courage, on numerous occasions, which the soldiers of no country could surpass. But it was at Rome and Venice that the Italian nation won her spurs, and made good her claim to join the communion of the noble and the free states of the earth. In the former city, when the pope had fled, the republicans organised a government which for five months preserved order throughout the land, such as Romagna had not known for generations, with no bloodshed, and scarcely any imprisonment or exile; indeed, with a marvellous scantiness of punishment of any kind;—while, during nearly the whole of this period, Rome, with 14,000 improvised troops, made good her defence against 30,000 French, supplied with the best artillery, and commanded by experienced generals, and Garibaldi drove the invading army of

Naples before him like frightened sheep.\* With such means and against such antagonists it was impossible to have done more; in the face of such hopeless odds few people and few cities would have done as much. For a space of time yet longer, Venice, under the elected dictatorship of one man, put forward energies and displayed virtues which were little expected from the most pleasure-loving and sybaritic city of the world. The wealthy brought their stores, the dissolute shook off their luxury, the effeminate braced themselves to hardship and exertion, and without assistance or allies these heroic citizens kept at bay for many months the whole force of the Austrian empire, and at last obtained liberal and honourable terms. After two such examples as these, the Italians can never again be despised as incapable and cowardly, or pronounced unfit for the freedom they had seized so gallantly and wielded so well. The comparison of 1848 with 1821 indicates a whole century of progress; and makes us confident, in spite of the cloudy and impenetrable present, that the day of the final emancipation of Italy must be near at hand.

Then Italy and Hungary—how unlike France and Germany—have shown themselves rich in men not unequal to or unworthy of the crisis. While in the two latter countries, convulsions so deep and startling, exigencies so suggestive and imperative, as seemed especially fitted to call forth whatever genius and greatness might be lying dormant in obscure inaction, waiting for its hour, have brought to light no single man of eminence or commanding character,—while, in those times of trial which test of what metal men are made, many reputations have been ruined, and none have been created,—in the east and in the south men have sprung up as

\* This army, however, had no good will towards the conflict.

they were wanted, and such as were wanted. Hungary has produced Kossuth, a wonderful orator and a man of great genius, though scarcely a great statesman, revered, loved, and almost worshipped by his countrymen, in despite of that failure generally so fatal to all popular idols. In Italy—not to speak of Balbo, Capponi, and other less known names—three men of tried capacities and characters have appeared, and made good their claim to be the leaders and organisers of Italian independence, Azeglio, Mazzini, and Manin. As patriotic writer, as gallant soldier, as prime minister of a constitutional kingdom, the first of these has shown his devotion to Italy, and his ability to serve her; and, both as virtual ruler of Piedmont, and head of the moderate party, is probably now the most essential man in the Peninsula. Mazzini, who previously had been regarded as merely an impracticable, fanatical enthusiast, displayed, as Chief of the Roman Triumvirate, capacity both for administration and for war, which mark him as the future statesman of Rome, when Rome shall again be in her own hands: while Manin, who, as far as we are aware, was wholly unknown to fame, appeared at the critical moment when the fate of Venice hung in the balance, gifted with the precise qualities demanded by the emergency. When Italy shall be free, we need not fear any lack of men competent to guide her destinies.

V. All these, however, may by some be undervalued or denied as imaginary gains. But one great material fact stands out, an unquestionable reality. The revolutionary and the reactionary deluge have alike swept by, and the Sardinian constitution is left standing. The free institutions established by Charles Albert on the 4th of March, 1848, have survived his death, the utter defeat of the Piedmontese army, and the attempts of internal foes, and are still in active and successful ope-

ration under the successor of the monarch who granted them, and under the ministry of the nobleman whose labours were mainly instrumental in procuring them. A short sketch of the chief provisions of the constitution will show its real value, and the immense importance not only to Piedmont, but to all Italy, of its permanence and successful working.

“The State of Sardinia is a Representative monarchy: the throne is hereditary, and the person of the king inviolable. In him is concentrated the whole executive power of the State. He makes peace and declares war; appoints to all offices, and concludes all treaties—with this proviso, that any treaties involving taxation or a variation of territory, are invalid without the consent of the Chambers.

“The Legislative power resides in the king and the two Chambers collectively. The Chambers must be convoked every year, but the king has the power of dissolving the Chamber of Deputies. The initiation of laws is common to all three branches of the Legislature. The civil list of the king shall be fixed by the Chambers on his accession to the throne, when he shall take a solemn oath of allegiance to the constitution.

“The Chamber of Deputies is chosen by electors of all classes, who pay a very small amount of direct taxes, all heads of trading or industrial establishments, and parties engaged in arts and professions (employment in which is assumed to indicate *capacity* and education). The Deputies are required to be thirty years of age; they are inviolable during session except for flagrant crime; they are *representatives*, not *delegates*, bound by authoritative instructions; they are chosen for five years; and have the right of impeachment over the Ministers.

“The Senate is composed of Members nominated by the king for life, out of a variety of classes; *e.g.*, the Archbishops and Bishops, President and experienced Members of the Chamber of Deputies, the Ambassadors and Ministers of State, the Chief Magistrates and Judges, Generals and Admirals, Members of the Academy of Sciences, and generally all who have rendered eminent services, or done honour to their country. The Senate is, like our House of Lords, the Supreme Court of Judicature of the Realm.

"All citizens, of every class, are equal before the law, and all contribute to the State in proportion to their means. No man can be arrested without legal warrant. The press is free; the right of public meeting is guaranteed; and no taxes can be imposed without the consent of the Chambers.

"The Judges are irremovable after they have served three years. All judicial proceedings are to be conducted in strict conformity to the written law."

This constitution, which secures civil rights and equal freedom to every citizen—and is, in fact, our own, minus an hereditary House of Peers—has now been in active operation for more than three years, to the general satisfaction of all parties. The Marquis Massimo d'Azeglio, who is at the head of the ministry, is an able, popular, and well-trying man, who appears thoroughly to comprehend the working of free institutions, and can generally command in the Chambers a majority of two to one. As long as he lives and remains at the helm we have little fear of any mismanagement or serious imbroglio; and it is to be hoped that a few years' practice may train up many statesmen fitted to succeed him when he shall retire or die. It is scarcely possible, we think, to estimate too highly the ultimate gain to the cause of liberty and good government throughout Italy, by this establishment of a constitutional limited monarchy in one corner of the Peninsula. It will be impossible for either Austria or the smaller states to govern so despotically as they have done, with such a reproach and such an example at their side. It will be impossible, also, for the radical party any longer to declare that no substantial liberty can be enjoyed by Italy except under a republic. On the one side it will shame tyrants: on the other, it will instruct freemen. In time of peace it will train up patriotic statesmen for future emergencies; in time of disturbance it will be a banner to rally round. It will give Italians a definite



example to follow—a definite object to demand. It will show that even in Italy liberty is not incompatible with order and progress, and will, we trust, pave the way to a national prosperity, that may excite at once the admiration and the emulation of surrounding states. Piedmont, though defeated at Novara, may yet on another field, with nobler weapons, and in a higher sense, be the regenerator and emancipator of Italy.

In the other states of Italy, though not a trace remains of their transient liberal institutions, though the press is silenced, and every book of interest or value is prohibited, though the most stupid and cruel oppressions are daily accumulating wrath against the day of wrath, though the Pope has returned to his vomit, and the Neapolitan sow to its wallowing in the mire,—yet no man who is acquainted with the internal feelings of the country has lost heart. The passion for liberty, independence, and nationality, has enormously gained ground; the municipal jealousies which divided the several sections and cities of the Peninsula have been materially weakened; the papal tyranny is becoming daily more odious;—the Mazzini party, as it is called, is admitted even by its opponents to be rapidly spreading;—and if the impatient man who is at its head can have forbearance to bide his time, and wait his opportunity, it may well prove that the day of deliverance is far nearer than is thought. When that day comes, it is more than probable that the conduct of the people, and the result to princes, will be very different from those last displayed.



## FRANCE IN JANUARY 1852.\*

WHEN we wrote of France in May 1851—of the difficulty of its task, the instability of its government, and the perplexity of its path—hopeless as we then were of a successful issue, we could scarcely have anticipated that in seven short months that government would be overthrown once more, that task abandoned in despair, that path more dark and intricate than ever. Within three years from the expulsion of the Orleanist dynasty by a knot of fanatical republicans, both victors and vanquished in that sudden struggle have been suppressed by a military despotism; the polity they had joined in constructing has been violently swept away, and France has again become a *tabula rasa* for constitutional experimentalists. We wrote thus in May, —

“The Revolution of February — being (as it were) an aggressive negation, not a positive effort, having no clear idea at its root, but being simply the product of discontent and disgust — furnishes no foundation for a government. Loyalty to a legitimate monarch; deference to an ancient aristocracy; faith in a loved and venerated creed; devotion to a military leader; sober schemes for well understood material prosperity; — all these may form, and have formed, the foundation of stable and powerful governments: mere reaction, mere denial, mere dissatisfaction, mere vague desires, mere aggression on existing things — never.

“To construct a firm and abiding commonwealth out of such materials, and in the face of such obstacles as we have attempted to delineate, — such is the problem the French people are called upon to conduct to a successful issue. Without a positive and

\* From the “North British Review.”

1. *Œuvres de Louis Napoléon Bonaparte*. Paris. 3 tom. 8vo.
2. *Des Idées Napoléoniennes*. Par L. N. BONAPARTE. Paris.

earnest creed; without a social hierarchy; without municipal institutions and the political education they bestow; without a spirit of reverence for rights, and of obedience to authority, penetrating all ranks,—we greatly doubt whether the very instruments for the creation of a republic are not wanting. A republic does not create these—it supposes and postulates their existence. They are inheritances from the past, not possessions to be called into being by a fiat. They are the slow growth of a settled, political, and social system, acting with justice, founded on authority and tradition, and consolidated by long years of unshaken continuance.”

Viewed in our imperfect light, and from our field of limited and feeble vision, the sun in his wide circuit shines down upon no sadder spectacle than France now presents to the gazing and astonished world. Rich in material resources, but unable to turn any of them to full account; teeming with brilliant talent and clear intelligence, but doomed to see the talent prostituted and the intelligence abortive; prolific beyond any other country in theories of social regeneration and impossible perfection, yet fated beyond any other to wallow in the mire of the past, and to re-tread the weary cycle of ancestral blunders; unable to reduce into wholesome practice any one of her magnificent conceptions; unable to conduct to a successful issue any one of her promising experiments; ever building houses of cards, which every wind of passion sweeps away; ever re-commencing, never ending; the loftiest and most insatiable of aspirants, the most paltry and laggard of performers; assuming to lead the vanguard of civilisation, but for ever loitering in the rear, for ever acting as the drag. Such is the aspect of France to eyes yet shrouded in the flesh, and darkened by the fears and frailties of humanity. To higher and wiser witnesses,

“ Who watch, like gods, the rolling hours,  
With larger, other, eyes than ours,”

who, gifted with a deeper insight, and purged from our dazzling and misleading sympathies, can see through the present confusion to the future issue—it may be that all these convulsions and vicissitudes are but the struggles of Chaos to form itself into Kosmos, the throes and efforts of a new birth. Each apparent failure may be an essential step in the process of ultimate achievement; each backsliding may be a *reculer pour mieux sauter*; each shattered hope, over whose ruin we have mourned, may have been built upon a false foundation; each seemingly fair and promising construction, which we repine to see destroyed, may have been an obstacle to something sounder and more solid in the distance; and the late apparent annihilation of all that past toil and sacrifice had gained, may be, when viewed aright, an indispensable pre-requisite to greater and more permanent acquisitions—not the ebb of progress—only the receding wave of the advancing tide.

Let us endeavour to arrive at a clear notion of the actual situation of affairs, by a rapid glance at the defunct constitution, and the conduct of the Assembly and the President respectively.

The destruction of the constitution inaugurated in 1848 has surprised no one; the peculiar mode and time of that destruction has surprised nearly everybody. From the outset it was evident that it was not made to last. The republic itself was a sudden and unwelcome improvisation. It was *imposed* by the violent agents of the revolution, and was never cordially accepted by the intelligence, the property, or the experience of the nation. When the Convention met, the republican form of government was *proclaimed*, not deliberated on nor chosen. The constitution, the work of this Convention, bore upon it the stamp of the circumstances

under which, and the body from which, it emanated. It was concocted by a combination of parties who had all of them ulterior aims, and whose ulterior aims were at variance with one another. The Republicans were anxious to make it as purely democratic as possible. The Constitutionals desired to make the Assembly supreme, both over executive and people. The Imperialists wished to prevent the return of the Bourbon branches. The Orleanists and Legitimists wished reciprocally to destroy each other's hopes. But all parties, dreading lest their rivals should, by caprice or accident, be recalled and entrusted with the executive authority, concurred in reducing that authority to a minimum. The constitution had many faults; this was probably its chief one. It would be unreasonable to demand from a scheme concocted to meet the wants and satisfy the exigencies of a passing crisis, and with the cannon of the barricades yet ringing in the ears of its fabricators, either the maturity of reflection which characterises the productions of patient reasoning, or the thorough understanding of human passions and requirements, which can only be obtained by long practice in political affairs; or that happy conformity with national tastes and manners, which belongs only to institutions which have grown up in the course of ages, and have become firmly rooted in the soil. Few of those who joined in the construction of it regarded it with hope; fewer still with admiration or real satisfaction. To some it was a work of desperation; to others a pilot balloon; to nearly all an expedient to feel their way out of an embarrassing position. Between the various and hostile elements which contended for the mastery in France, the constitution was not a permanent peace, but merely an armistice, a hollow truce. From the first hour that it was promulgated no one had faith in its durability; and perhaps the wisest provision which

it contained was the clause which anticipated the probability and prescribed the mode of its revision.

A powerful and long-established government—skilful and unscrupulous, and as resolute in denying the most reasonable demands of the constitutional opposition, as the wildest clamours of the socialists—had been overthrown by a popular outbreak. A period of strange misrule had succeeded, in which the more worthless of the working classes and their leaders reigned almost supreme. The first attempt at return to that state of order and repression which the very life of society demanded, had been met by the desperate insurrection of the 15th of May, which gave a glimpse of the fearful fate which hung over Paris, and the other great cities of France, if the arm of the executive should be for one moment paralysed or shattered. Scarcely had this been expressed, and the capital been rescued from the "*douze heures de pillage*" which Blanqui had promised to his followers, when the same warning was repeated in still more awful tones. The three days' battle in the streets, which only the concentrated energy of a most resolute dictator was able to determine in favour of the cause of property and law—when Cavaignac was preparing to blow up a whole quarter of the city rather than run the risk of a defeat; when the issue appeared so doubtful, and the case so threatening, that he even meditated withdrawing his army into the country, and concentrating his forces for a prolonged civil war; when the skill and desperation of the insurgents was such, and compelled such terrible severity, that to this hour it is not known how many perished, and some estimate the number at 10,000—this terminated the series of impressive lessons which should have shown the contrivers of the constitution what was needed, and in what direction their fears and precautions ought to lie. But while the ears of every one yet tingled with the frightful

denunciations of the defeated insurrectionists; while the heart of every one yet beat at the thought of the horrors they had barely escaped, through the dangerous but indispensable resource of a military dictatorship; these pedants devoted their entire attention to weakening and hampering the executive power which had just, and with difficulty, saved them:—to a situation and necessities almost unheard of in the world till then, they opposed ideas and plans whose impotence and inadequacy had been fully proved by reiterated failures.

It was clear that what France demanded from the constituent Assembly, was the establishment of a supreme power truly and efficiently executive, and a representation really national,—a government sufficiently strong to satisfy the craving *need of being governed*, which all Frenchmen feel by a secret instinct, and have been accustomed to by long generations of a bureaucracy,—and competent to wield, with a firm and masterly hand, the stupendous administrative sceptre which the centralisation organised by Napoleon had bestowed on France; and a legislative assembly which should give to the various elements which constitute the real permanent majority, to the summary of all the feelings, opinions, and interests of the nation, an easy, natural, and regular predominance, proportioned to their respective worth and weight. How did it discharge this double task?

For fifty years France has been covered with the columns and arches of a most majestic administrative edifice, constructed by a master hand, which strikes the imagination by its grandeur, and charms the eye by the uniformity and regularity of its arrangements. The central power, seated in the capital, radiates to the remotest corners of the land, embraces everything in its glance, grasps everything in its hand, exerts everywhere its mischievous stimulus or its stern control. It asks advice from local bodies, but gives them no power, and

permits no interference. Even where it respects private rights, it paralyses personal freedom, and weakens individual responsibility; it keeps everything and everybody under surveillance and in leading strings. A system of direct taxation, strictly levied, gives it an acquaintance with all fortunes; an organised system of state education opens to it an entrance into all families. Nothing, either in the domain of thought or of material interests, escapes its interference; everything looks towards it; everything reposes upon it. From one end of the country to the other, every one of the 37,000 communes into which it is divided, and every one of the 36,000,000 of people who inhabit it, keep their eyes steadily fixed upon the head quarters of the motive power; await their signal from its will; imbibe their inspiration from its breath. The tremendous weapon of authority thus given to the central government, the fearful burden of responsibility thus concentrated upon a single head,—hard to be wielded and oppressive to be borne even by royalty secure of its position, accustomed to command, aided by prestige, and protected by inviolability,—the new constitution placed in the hands of a novice, renewable every four years; chosen by the mass to-day, re-confounded with the crowd to-morrow; chosen by one party, and consequently the antagonist and the destined victim of all other parties; the butt of a thousand intriguers, and driven to counter-intrigues for his defence; superintended with a hostile vigilance by the most unsatisfiable and imperious of masters; viz., a single, numerous, inexperienced, divided, and factious Assembly, seldom suspending its sittings, and having always a committee of “detective police” to watch him during its short vacations. A dictatorship in the hands of a puppet! Supreme power in the hands of one who is watched and treated as a public enemy! A most subtle, complete, and universal organisation, created by



the fiat, and designed for the purposes, of an iron and imperial will, yet confided to the management of a transient, ill-paid officer, bound hand and foot to the caprices of a popular assembly! The President was expected, out of a salary of 25,000*l.* a-year, to fill with *éclat* the position of representative chief of a nation fond of splendour, of gaiety, of hospitable show. He was expected to keep the cup of supreme power ever at his lips, but never to do more than taste it. He was to be a great monarch without monarchical permanence, without monarchical veto, without monarchical inviolability. He was carried up to a pinnacle from which he saw all authority, all grandeur, all dominion within his reach, and as it were his appointed inheritance, and then was bidden peremptorily to descend from the giddy eminence, and to turn away his gaze from the alluring prize. Restored for a moment to the imperial throne, and grasping the reins of the imperial chariot, he was expected to still every throb of imperial ambition. Selected by a people accustomed to be much and energetically governed, needing to be so, clamorous to be so, and intrusted therefore with the position of a Cæsar or a Czar, he was expected to be the submissive slave of a debating club of vestrymen, quarrelling among themselves, and elected by far fewer numbers than himself.

Such was the executive power in France as defined and inaugurated by the new constitution: was the legislative body more wisely organised? It was perhaps scarcely to be expected, that a people just broke loose from all rule, fresh from a triumphant struggle with established authority, fought in the name of the exciting watchwords of liberty, equality, fraternity, should admit any aristocratic element into the new system they were framing; but why should they have deprived themselves of that mighty influence in the scale of order and stability, which, as all history shows, is afforded by a second

Chamber? There are many ways of constituting an Upper House without making it either a council of nominees, or a senate of hereditary peers. It might be elected simply by a higher class of electors, or, as in Belgium, require higher qualifications in its members. It might, as in Sardinia, be composed of men selected from among literary, judicial, scientific, and military notabilities. It might be chosen by different districts, and for different terms, from those of the Lower House, as in the state of New York, or might be obtained by a double election, as in the Federal Union of America. There are so many modes in which an effective and valuable second Chamber might be obtained, that the French had no excuse for rejecting it on the ground of difficulty. But the Assembly being resolved to retain the supreme power in its own hands, was unwilling to be in any way checked or fettered, or compelled to an unwelcome degree of deliberation. It therefore cast away, almost without the compliment of a discussion, the suggestion of a second Chamber, with all the obvious advantages that might have flowed from such an arrangement, and substituted a most clumsy and incautious scheme for preventing hasty or inconsiderate changes in one direction only,—by enacting that, however faulty their new constitution might prove, it should be in the power of a small minority to prohibit its amendment. They required a majority of *three-fourths* to legalise a revision. They tied their own hands in the one case, in which, as it happened, it was peculiarly desirable to leave them free. Everything else was stamped in moveable types: the hasty and unmanageable constitution was alone stereotyped.—It was, perhaps, scarcely to be expected that, in a constitution springing from a revolution which, if not made by the masses, was at least promptly seized upon by them, any other system than that of universal suffrage should have

been adopted. But three things these lawmakers might have done which they did not: they might at least have left the discussion of the matter free; they might have respected the principle, once adopted, when it pronounced against them, as well as when it spoke in their favour; and they might have surrounded its exercise with all the wise precautions and judicious arrangements which could mitigate its dangers, and render it the *bonâ fide* expression of the nation's will. Instead of this, the Convention hastily passed a law early in 1848, placing the principle of universal suffrage under the protection of the tribunals—making it penal to question or discuss it—treating the exposure of its evils and its dangers as sedition and treason. In the next place, as if conscious that their successors would desire to undo their clumsy workmanship, they violated the principle they had laid down, setting universal suffrage, or the government of the majority, at defiance, by enacting that, where the constitution was in question, the many should bow to the decision of the few. Consider for a moment the full extent of this grotesque and insolent absurdity. Every republic, and the republic of 1848 more nakedly than any other, is based upon the will of the majority. It is their sole recognised foundation. An absolute monarchy rests upon the divine right of kings. An hereditary aristocracy rests upon the superior claims and powers of special families. A theocracy rests upon direct religious sanction. But republics sweep all these away. The republic of 1848 ignored and denied them all. Hereditary right, constitutional legality, established institutions, equilibrium of power,—it sacrificed all to the blind worship of THE MAJORITY. No sooner, however, had it done so, than it turned round upon the nation, and said: “The majority is omnipotent, and its authority unquestionable, only to authorise us and to sanction our decrees: we pronounce it powerless to

negative or change them. So long as a minority of one-fourth supports our constitution, so long that constitution shall be inviolable." The majority of the nation, by the voice of the majority of its representatives legally elected, demands a change in the form of the government. The minority steps in and says, "No! there shall be no such change — neither to-day, nor to-morrow, nor ten years hence, so long as one-fourth of the people or their deputies object to it. We, the few, will control and govern you, the many." And the men who held this language, and considered this proceeding just, are the republicans *par excellence*! The democrats are the oligarchs. The very men who thus contended for the permanent right of the few to bind the many, were the very men who sprung out of the victory of the many over the few, — whose position, whose very existence, was the creation of the principle they thus repudiated! The constitution which declared itself inviolable and unchangeable, even by a large majority, was the very constitution which was found to be so intolerable that a large majority insisted upon its alteration. Were they to retain and obey a bad law, because that law itself forbade them to repeal it? Whence could anybody derive a right to make such an enactment? With what decency or justice could a constituent assembly, itself the offspring of the victory of the majority over the minority, enact that in future the minority should bind the majority?

If the principle of universal suffrage was thus slightly respected, even by those who asserted it most loudly, the arrangements for carrying it into practical operation were marked by no extraordinary sagacity. Out of the seven or eight million of voters who found themselves endowed with the franchise, a very large proportion consisted of the peasantry of the rural districts, little cognisant of political affairs, and little interested in

party strife. Numbers of them would have no idea how to vote: numbers of them would not care how they voted: numbers more would not wish to vote at all. The rock on which universal suffrage is almost always wrecked is, the ignorance or the indifference of the great mass of the electors. Thousands of the peasantry never stir from home: hundreds of thousands know no one beyond the limits of their own commune, and never hear the names of obscure or intriguing political aspirants. If, therefore, it were desired most effectually to confirm their indifference to the elections, and to embarrass them in their choice of a candidate, and utterly to confuse their comprehension of the whole transaction, no better scheme could have been devised than to make them vote by *departments* instead of by *arrondissements*, or by *communes*,—and to call upon them to elect at once, not one man, whom they may chance to know, but a whole list of ten, fifteen, or twenty, the names of nearly all of whom they probably never heard of, and of whose respective qualifications they cannot form the most remote conception. A plan like this was sure to throw the virtual choice into the hands of clubs, or knots of political agitators, who would *exploiter* the great body of the electors for their own purposes and interests; and was likely to end in the great mass of the people retiring from the exercise of the suffrage in carelessness or disgust. One of the chief evils, indeed, of universal suffrage is, that it never does, and rarely can, give the actual sentiments and wishes of the numerical mass of the population. Those interested in political strife vote; those who are sick of it, or indifferent to it, abstain from voting. Among the working classes this is particularly the case. There is the peaceful industrious artisan, loving work much, independence more, and his family most of all, living aloof from the turmoil and passions of the public world, and whose



leisure is spent by the domestic hearth, and in the society of his wife and children. And there is the artisan who considers himself enlightened, who frequents *cafés*, who reads newspapers, who heads processions, who mans barricades, to whom haranguing is far pleasanter than honest labour. To the first, a day lost at elections is a nuisance and an injury, a supper or a breakfast wanting, diminished wages, an unfinished job, scantier food or clothing for his children or himself. To the second it is a joyful holiday, a noisy spree, a positive indulgence, possibly an actual gain of more than he would have earned in a week by steady industry. The result is, that the first man, whose vote would be of real value and meaning to the community, never gives it: the second, whose vote is worthless and a deception, records it on every occasion; and the nation is as far as ever from having gathered the real feelings and opinions of its citizens. In times of excitement and of novelty, such as the first general election, or the choice of a president, this evil is not so much felt; but so strongly was it beginning to be feared, that one of the last proposals laid before the late Assembly, was for making it penal to abstain from the exercise of the franchise,—for inflicting a fine on all who neglected to record their votes.\*

Such being the constitution imposed upon France, but never submitted to the country for ratification, what has been the conduct of the Assembly elected under its auspices? Its whole career has been one series of intrigues against the President, of squabbles among its members, of assaults upon the liberties of the nation, of violations of its trust, and of decisions which gave the lie to its origin and its professions; and it has done

\* For this sketch of the vices of the constitution, we are greatly indebted to two *brochures* by M. Albert de Broglie.

more to sicken France with the very name and principle of representative government than any elected body since the days of the National Convention. It was elected under a republic ; it was appointed to consolidate and perfect the republic ; it commenced life by swearing allegiance and fidelity to the republic ;— yet it was composed in great part of Orleanists, Bonapartists, and Legitimists, who made no secret either of their actual views or of their ulterior designs. Probably not more than 250 members were at any time genuine republicans at heart. The Orleanists visited Claremont, and intrigued for the return of the exiled House. The Legitimists avowedly received their directions from Wiesbaden, and kept steadily before them the interests of the Count de Chambord. The Bonapartists openly sighed after the imperial *régime*, and took their orders from the Elysée. The members of the Mountain alone were faithful to their trust ; they stood to their colours, though conscious that the country was against them, and combined with each of their antagonists in turn to defeat and embarrass the others. A sadder, more factious, more disreputable spectacle than that Assembly, a free country has seldom seen. They turned round almost immediately upon the constituents who had elected them. They abolished universal suffrage by 466 votes to 223, and disfranchised three millions of electors. They sent an army to crush the republic of Rome, then fighting so gallantly for its existence, by 469 votes to 180. They handed over the primary instruction of the nation to the clergy by 445 votes to 187. They enacted laws and sanctioned proceedings against the liberty of the press, severer than Louis Philippe had ever ventured upon. By compelling every writer to sign his name to each article in the journals, they struck a fatal blow at both the influence and the independence of journalism. They sat nearly in permanence, and kept the nation in per-



petual hot water. Whenever they adjourned for a short holiday, they left a committee of watch-dogs to overhaul every act of the executive. Their questors attempted to gain the command of the army. And, finally, at the moment of their dissolution, they were discussing, and were expected, by a factious combination, to pass a law ("on the responsibility of the executive") which would have virtually transferred the whole power of the state into their hands.

While the Assembly were thus conspiring against, violating, and discrediting the constitution to which they owed their existence, and which they had sworn to maintain, the conduct of the President had scarcely been one whit more patriotic or more honest. From the first day of his inauguration, it was evident that he was determined to be re-elected — by a revision of the constitution, if that could be obtained; if not, in defiance of the constitution. It is even probable that he aimed, not only at a prolongation, but at an increase of his power. For this he flattered the army; for this he removed and appointed generals and prefects; for this he played into the hands of the priests; for this he joined the conservative majority in enacting the law of the 31st of May; for this he joined the republicans in demanding its repeal. Every action betrayed his patient plodding, and unscrupulous ambition. But on the other hand, he had shown always such sagacity and often such dignity; his language and bearing were moulded with such unerring tact to suit the tastes and fancies of the French people; and his personal objects, as far as they were seen, were felt to harmonise so much with the apparent interests of the country, that a strong feeling had grown up among nearly all classes in his favour. His popularity rose as that of the Assembly declined. While reputation after reputation among public men had sunk or suffered shipwreck, — while

every other statesman had gone down in general estimation,—while Cavaignac had lost much of his prestige, and Lamartine had been utterly extinguished, and Thiers had been discredited, baffled, and unmasked, and even Guizot had failed to make any progress towards the redemption of his fame, — the character of Louis Napoleon gradually rose, from the first day of his election; every step, whether his own or his opponents', contributed to confirm his popularity and consolidate his power. He suffered his rivals and antagonists to exhaust and expose themselves by their own violence; and, keeping strictly within the limits of his prerogative he "bided his time," and came out victorious from every struggle. Previous, therefore, to the *coup d'état*, there had gradually grown up among nearly all classes of Frenchmen, a conviction that the destinies of the nation would be far safer, and its character far higher, if confided to a man who, whatever were his faults, had at least shown that he possessed a definite purpose and a firm will, — than if left in the hands of a body of men who had manifested no signs of a lofty and decorous patriotism, who had regarded all questions of public policy, foreign and domestic, only as they could be turned to their own private or factious advantage, and who had permitted the sacred banner of the commonwealth, intrusted to their keeping, to be torn by the animosities, and soiled by the passions of party.

Indeed, it is not easy to exaggerate the discredit brought upon themselves, and upon the very theory of representative government, by the proceedings of the leaders of the various political parties in France. Chosen by a suffrage almost universal, bound to their constituents by the closest ties, and returning to them after only three years' tenure of office, it might have been anticipated that, if only from selfish considerations, they would have steadily devoted themselves to study

the real and permanent interests of the country, and would have co-operated heartily and zealously with the executive in devising and carrying out schemes for rendering France peaceful and prosperous at home, and powerful and respected abroad. It might have been hoped that their labour would have been earnestly directed towards developing the vast resources of the country, and securing to its industry the freest and most favourable action; that everything calculated to raise and improve the condition of the masses would have had their first and most sedulous attention; and that, above all things, they would have striven hard and have sacrificed much for the maintenance of that silent internal harmony, which is the primary necessity of a nation's life. It might have been expected that they would have regarded every question of foreign policy, first, in its bearings on the special interests of France, and secondly, in its bearings on the progress elsewhere of that freedom which they had just reconquered, and of which everywhere they were the professed defenders. Instead of this, party politics, not social philosophy, occupied almost their whole time; and external action was dictated by a desire to gain the support of this or that section, to destroy this rival, or discredit that antagonist; till their entire career became one indecent and disreputable scramble.

The result inevitably was an increasing feeling on the part of the public, first of indignation, then of disgust, latterly of sickened and most ominous indifference. Ominous, that is, for popular leaders and representative assemblies;—for the people—weary of watching the objectless and petty squabbles of their chosen legislators, and disheartened by finding that the rulers they selected for themselves treated them no better, and served them no more effectively, than the rulers who had been imposed upon them—began to

turn their attention to their own private affairs, and to discover how much more they could do for themselves than governments and assemblies could do for them. Since they had trusted more to themselves and less to parliaments, they had prospered comparatively well. Trade was spirited, and industry was thriving and increasing. The political storms which used to agitate all ranks began to pass nearly unheeded over their heads; for they perceived how paltry and inconsequential they were. They put their own shoulders to the wheel, instead of calling on the gods above to help them; and all the noisy quarrels of the great Olympus fell, as by magic, into their genuine insignificance. An idea had already dawned upon the French, that an Assembly which had done so little for them was not of much importance to them; and that if they could prosper in spite of its scandalous dereliction of its duties, and its selfish abuse of its powers, they might perhaps prosper even were it non-existent. A wholesome lesson, possibly, for the people, but a fatal one for demagogues and orators.

When a people has thus begun to look after their private affairs instead of discussing affairs of state, and to act for themselves instead of calling on their rulers to act for them, only one thing is needed to insure their welfare—viz., that the government should bring them and secure them tranquillity and order. If it will do this, they ask no more: if it does not do this, it abnegates its paramount and especial function; it becomes to them a nuisance, not a protection—"a mockery, a delusion, and a snare." Now, few Englishmen are aware, though it is no novel information to a Parisian, to what an extent Frenchmen had come to look upon the Assembly in this light. The constant series of moves and stratagems of which the history of that body was made up, kept the nation in a perpetual state of

excitement, expectation, and turmoil. They never knew what would come next. They were constantly on the *qui vive* for some new explosion. So long as the Assembly was sitting, there was incessant agitation and wild unrest; and thousands would thankfully have paid the members their twenty-five francs a day not to sit at all. Peace—comparative peace—came with prorogation; but the sessions were felt to be deplorably too long, and the vacations piteously too few. So that the body which ought to have been the shield and safeguard of the nation, the guardian of its interests, the protector of its rights, had come to be regarded as a plague, a mischief, and an enemy. Only when it ceased to sit, did France begin to breathe freely.

The plain truth is that no nation—not even the French—can bear to be for ever in hot water. Ceaseless political agitation is an element in which neither material prosperity, nor moral wellbeing, can live. If it seemed hopeless to find the needed tranquillity in freedom and republicanism, who can wonder if many lost faith and heart, and began to cast a sigh after the calm despotism which beckoned to them out of the softening haze of the past, or towards that which loomed gradually out of the uncertain future. France, for many months back, had echoed in her heart of hearts the words of that touching inscription on the Italian tombstone—*implora pace*. Wearied with achievements which had led to nothing, and victories which had been crowned by no enduring conquests, and trophies dearly purchased, but barren of the promised consequences—her whole desires were fast merging into the one succinct petition of the grand old warrior of Carthage, who—harassed by perpetual warfare, broken by family afflictions, and thwarted by an ungrateful state—closed a public life of singular glory and of bitter disenchantment, with the simple prayer, comprised in so few



words, yet full of such melancholy pathos:—" *Ego, Hannibal, peto pacem!*"

Such was the state of feeling in France, and such the relative position of the contending parties, immediately previous to the *coup d'état*,—and it is important thoroughly to fix this in our minds, in order to comprehend the full meaning of the President's attempt, and the explanation of the manner in which it was received by the nation. On the one side stood Louis Napoleon, who had far surpassed all expectations formed of him from his discreditable antecedents, and had risen higher day by day in public estimation—who had shown consummate knowledge of the temper of the people, and supreme tact in dealing with it—who had finally taken his stand on the broad basis of universal suffrage—who had long foreseen and been preparing for the inevitable struggle—and with strange sagacity and patience had, as the phrase is, given his opponents "rope enough to hang themselves." On the other side stood the Assembly, on the eve of an election, yet seemingly intent on showing how unfit they were to be re-chosen,—pointing, as their sole titles to popular confidence and a renewal of their trust, to millions of constituents disfranchised—to the revision of a clumsy constitution, demanded by the people but refused by themselves—to the freedom of the press, through their means, trampled under foot—to France, through their intrigues, rendered light as a feather in the balance of European power—to her gallant army, through their connivance, engaged in the degrading employment of restoring a miserable pontiff, and enslaving an emancipated people—to a sacred trust, perverted to the purposes of low ambition—to the very name of a representative assembly, through their misconduct, covered with ridicule and shame.

What the President did we need not relate here;

how he dissolved the Assembly, abolished the constitution, imprisoned deputies and generals, appealed to the people, and extinguished all resistance with unsparing severity,—all this is known to every one. The degree of his criminality in this daring usurpation will be differently estimated by different men according to the view they may take as to the wishes and interests of France, the urgency of the crisis, and the reality of the alleged and indicated intention on the part of the Assembly to have forestalled and deposed him. On the one hand, it is unquestionable that if he had waited till the Assembly had passed the bill (on executive responsibility), which they were then considering, he would have been wholly in their power. If he had allowed matters to go on as they were till the election of May, a popular outbreak and a deplorable convulsion would have been almost inevitable; for matters had been so arranged that both the legislative and presidential elections would take place at nearly the same time, under a disputed electoral law, and when all the powers of the state were in a condition of paralysis and dissolution. The greatest contest ever known in a representative system was to take place round the dying bed of an expiring President and an expiring Assembly; and the president sure to be chosen was a president ineligible by law.—Moreover, Louis Napoleon might plead that *he*, as well as the Assembly, was elected by universal suffrage; that the Assembly had ceased to be in harmony with their constituents, while he had not; that when two co-ordinate powers, equally chosen by the people, disagree, the only mode of deciding the dispute is by an appeal to the authority from which both emanate; and that all he did was to make that appeal *arbitrarily*, which the constitution denied him the power of doing legally. On the other hand, it is equally undeniable that the act which he has perpetrated



bears, on the face of it, all the features of a great crime. The constitution which he has violently suppressed, bad as it was, was the deliberately framed constitution of his country, and was the one which, knowing all its faults, he had sworn to maintain and obey. The liberties which he had so ruthlessly trampled under foot, were the liberties which he had sworn to respect and to watch over. The blood which he has shed was the blood of his fellow-citizens, and ought to have been precious in his eyes. The oath which he has broken was an oath solemnly tendered and often voluntarily reaffirmed. Therefore, if he is to be forgiven, he must sue out his pardon from the future. Nothing can palliate his crime, except its being the last. Nothing can excuse his seizure of power, except the patriotic use he makes of it. In the meantime we are not anxious to hold the balance or to cast the lot between the guilty President and the guilty Assembly. We adopt the words of Victor Cousin on a different occasion,—“Je renvoie, donc, les extravagances aux extravagans, les crimes aux criminelles, et je détourne les yeux de ce sang et de cette boue,”—and, from the sickening and idle task of awarding the palm between two culpable combatants, we turn to consider the prospects, the feelings, and the fate of FRANCE under the new *régime*. Power, illegally seized, is sometimes legally sanctioned. The crimes of individual ambition are often overruled by Providence so as to work out the welfare of nations.

In the first place, Louis Napoleon's usurpation has been since ratified and sanctioned in a manner which, after every reasonable deduction has been made on account of the circumstances of the polling, leaves no ground whatever for doubting that it was approved by the nation. Whatever some of our English journals, in their anger and amazement, may say as to the pro-

bability of the returns having been falsified, no man in France believes that anything of the kind has been done, to any important extent at least. The total adult male population of France is, as near as can be ascertained, nine millions, and of these we can scarcely reckon fewer to be disqualified from various causes than half a million. This would leave 8,500,000 as the total number of electors under universal suffrage. Of these in round numbers 7,500,000 have voted for Louis Napoleon, and 700,000 against him, while 300,000 have abstained from voting. There can be no doubt that some voted in ignorance of the facts of the case; some in an overweening fear of the socialists; some because, though no friends to Louis Napoleon, they saw no alternative between him and anarchy. It is impossible to affirm, that an election which has taken place while all newspapers were suppressed or garbled, while all public meetings and other facilities for forming and circulating opinion were proscribed, while the principal political chiefs were in durance, and while many departments were under martial law, can be considered as a fair one. We believe that Louis Napoleon has done himself serious injury and injustice by thus enabling his antagonists to assert, without the possibility of disproof, that votes have been tampered with, coerced, or obtained by fraud. But when every allowance has been made, we do not believe, and we think no man in France really believes, that the late poll does not give the fair and genuine result of the sentiments of the vast numerical majority of the nation. As to the feelings of the middle classes, we are left to gather the truth from a variety of indications. The great and continued rise in the French *rentes*, which, notwithstanding the foolish insinuations of some ignorant journalists, was perfectly *bonâ fide*; the equivalent advance in the price of railway shares; the increased price of

most kinds of goods; the immediate and marked revival in nearly all branches of trade; the issuing of orders which had been long suspended;—all concur to intimate the warm approval of the *coup d'état* by the industrial, commercial, and financial classes of France. All our own private foreign correspondents, whether enemies or friends of the President, confirm this conclusion. All agree in representing the state of anxiety and uncertainty in which they had long been kept as utterly intolerable; most express confidence in the wisdom of Louis Napoleon's future rule and its suitability to France; all speak of the satisfaction felt at the revolution being nearly universal among all who have anything to lose or anything to gain by honest and reputable means. The majority of the press we presume to be hostile, as also most of the politicians of France. The opinion of the Legitimists and that of the Orleanists appears to be divided. On the whole, however, it cannot be denied that France has elected Louis Napoleon with hearty good will, and anticipates much from his government.

In considering this matter, it is important that we should divest ourselves of our insular prejudices and habits of thought, and inquire not what we should feel under such circumstances, but what Frenchmen would be likely to feel; not what *régime* would be suitable for England, but what *régime* is best adapted for France. We must bear in mind that our notions of freedom and policy are utterly at variance with theirs—that our *beau idéal* of a perfect government is diametrically opposite to theirs. The French notion of liberty is political equality; the English notion is personal independence. The French are accustomed to have their government do everything for them, and direct them in everything, and they expect and wish it to do so; the English wish never to feel the action, or be compelled to recognise the existence, of government in their

daily and private life. It would therefore be both pedantic and misleading to judge the one nation by the standard of the other, or to act for the one on the system of the other. There are two kinds of freedom — two modes in which a nation may exercise and prove its liberty. We have chosen one; France has always shown a marked preference for the other. We prefer to govern ourselves: it is the peculiar taste of the Anglo-Saxon. The French prefer to choose their governor, and then leave everything in his hands: it is the fancy of the Celt. If we select the more troublesome mode, of directing and ruling ourselves, and displaying our liberty in every action of our daily life, we are scarcely at liberty to despise our neighbour as a slave, because he prefers the easier, lazier, and more dangerous plan of concentrating all *his* liberty into a single deed, and then abnegating self-management and self-responsibility for ever. Ours, indeed, is unquestionably the wiser and the safer plan; but it may not be suited for, or practicable among, a race so divergent from ourselves as are the people of France.

May not the French have been all along *upon the wrong tack*, in aiming at the establishment of a parliamentary government in their country? May they not have been entirely mistaken in adopting and supposing that they could manage a machine which appeared to have done so well with us? May not the form of government and the guarantees of freedom suitable for France be wholly different from those which have been found available in England?

An ancient legend of deep significance relates that there once lived a magician who had discovered a spell of singular cogency and virtue, by means of which he could command the attendance and compel the obedience of a familiar spirit, through whose services he acquired fame, wealth, and wide dominion. A favourite pupil, in-

spired with the ambition of rivalling his master's power, possessed himself of the mighty secret, pronounced the magic spell, and evoked the wondrous agency; but he had omitted one little and apparently unimportant word in the formula of invocation, and the demon, therefore, though he had obeyed the summons, refused to submit to the control of the incompetent magician; instead of being a serviceable and obedient slave, he became an imperious and terrific tyrant, whom the unfortunate evoker was unable to dismiss, who tormented him through life, and ended by tearing him to pieces.

The events that for the last sixty years have been passing on the other side of the Channel, seem the reproduction of this medieval tale. France is the ambitious pupil; representative institutions the magical spirit—the power for good or evil—which she has evoked, but cannot manage or dismiss. In summoning them to her aid to enable her to rise out of the servitude and degradation of the past, and enter on a new career of greatness and of glory, she forgot one little ingredient in the composition of the magic spell, the omission of which has converted a blessing into a bane, a patient servant into a capricious despot, and has transmuted the pride and safeguard of England into the curse and reproach of France. Personal virtue, public principle, pure, lofty, and self-abnegating patriotism was omitted from the invocation. The formula was borrowed faithfully enough; the spirit which sanctified and gave it efficacy was alone left out.

From its first glorious beginning in 1789, to its last ignominious ending in 1851, the whole history of Representative Assemblies in France has been one series of oscillations between despotism and impotence. When there has been only one Chamber it has almost invariably grasped at the supreme authority; when there have been two they have been as uniformly curbed or rendered insignificant. Parliaments in France have always either

absorbed the executive power or been absorbed by it. They have alternately been omnipotent or powerless. They have always been either sinned against, or sinning. Never yet have the legislative and the executive bodies worked in harmony as co-equal and co-ordinate functionaries. Neither has endured "a brother near the throne." Neither seems to have been able to conceive any medium between absolute authority or complete subserviency, nor to have believed its existence safe or dignified till its rival and colleague was effaced or enslaved. The reins of power have dangled between the two, snatched alternately by the one or the other,—the unhappy chariot of the state, in the meantime, dragged first into one ditch, then into the other, but always going to the dogs.

When the first great revolution broke out, sixty-two years ago, nearly all parties seemed disposed to put aside the past as an ugly dream,—the present looked very hopeful, and the future very bright. A monarchy strong in old associations, an Assembly rich in young hopes and enthusiastic aspirations, a fine spirit of patriotism and energy pervading most classes of the nation, seemed materials to warrant the most sanguine anticipations. But the struggle for supremacy soon began, the sovereign intrigued against the Chamber; the Chamber encroached upon the sovereign, thwarted him, fettered him, reduced him to a cypher, imprisoned him, and slew him. The Assembly possessed itself of the executive power, and governed the country by sections and committees: *how*, let the Reign of Terror, and the reaction, incapacity, and license of the Directory, proclaim. When Napoleon, on the 18th Brumaire, overpowered the Chambers by an armed force, and became First Consul, then Consul for life, then Emperor, the Representative Assemblies sank into a nullity, and throughout his reign remained little but courts for



registering and giving legal form and validity to his decrees. Under Louis XVIII. and Charles X., they were little heeded by the monarch, and little respected by the people; they spoke sometimes, but scarcely ever acted, and such spirit of liberty as survived in France was kept in existence by a resolute but persecuted press. Then came the revolution of 1830, when "the charter was henceforth to be a truth," a real fact; but corruption soon again made the Chambers what oppression had made them before, the passive tools of the monarch's will. An Assembly chosen by 180,000 electors, among whom the sovereign had 600,000 places to dispose of, could be no valid barrier to his authority; and Louis Philippe became nearly absolute under the forms of constitutionalism. Lastly followed the revolution of February, which installed in office a single popular and powerful Chamber, with an elective President high in station, dignity, and nominal authority, but watched, thwarted, and guarded as a public enemy. The old contest immediately recommenced; the President resented and fretted under his position of invidious and jealous slavery; the Assembly intrigued to engross the entire authority of the state; and the old miserable struggle was terminated by the old rusty weapon—a *coup d'état*, and a military despotism.

Now, why is it that constitutional government, which works so well in England, will not work at all in France? Why is it that, however often it is re-established there, the irresistible tendency of the nation towards another state of things ensures its speedy overthrow, or its virtual dormancy? Why is it that the representative system, every time it is set up in France, seems, by its failure, to proclaim its want of adaptation to the national necessities, its want of harmony with the national characteristics? Does not this reiterated rejection of it, like food which does not agree, indicate that



*it is not what France requires*, that it is not the medicine or the aliment which nature prescribes for her present constitution, or her actual maladies? Let us consider, especially, two points which will illustrate our meaning.

The representative system is essentially the creature and the child of *compromise*. Constitutional government, by which we mean an elective body emanating from the people, co-existing as a reality by the side of an executive, whether hereditary or not, endowed with the requisite authority, — is the result of mutual forbearance, moderation, and respect; exists only by virtue of these qualities; could not endure for an hour without them. It is an entire mistake to imagine such a scheme *theoretically good*; it is, on the contrary, *theoretically imperfect*, and is feasible only on the supposition of additional elements, which are not “nominated in the bond.” It is an entire mistake to affirm that English liberty has flourished in consequence of our glorious constitution. English liberty has flourished in spite of our anomalous and defective constitution; it has flourished in consequence of national virtues, in the absence of which that constitution would have been utterly unmanageable. The machine which is supposed to have made us what we are, would have broken down generations ago, had we been other than what we are. It is full of checks and counter-checks, of anomalies and incongruities, which would seem to indicate its fitting place, as an unworking model, in a museum of monstrosities. The monarch has the sole power of forming treaties, and of declaring peace and war. He alone commands the army. He alone appoints all functionaries, civil, military, and judicial. He can dissolve parliament whenever it thwarts him, and as often as he pleases. He can put an absolute veto on all its enactments. He can suspend laws by orders in council, if he can find ministers bold enough to run the risk of a refusal on the part of

parliament to indemnify them afterwards. The House of Lords, or a majority of them, about 200 men, can snub both king and House of Commons, and stop all proceedings indefinitely, and paralyse the entire action of government. Again, the House of Commons can release the army from their allegiance, by omitting to pass the yearly "Mutiny Bill." It can refuse the monarch the means of carrying on the war which it yet empowers him to declare, and of paying the functionaries whom it yet authorises him to appoint. It can impeach the ministers whom it allows him to nominate; yet if they are condemned, it still leaves him the power of conferring immunity upon them by an unlimited prerogative of pardon. The constitution gives the monarch means of absolute despotism, *if* he is wicked enough to desire it, and *if* the army will stand by him, and *if* the people will endure military rule. It gives the nobles power to set both people and monarch at defiance, if they are selfish and daring enough to do so. It gives the Lower House the power of starving both its colleagues into a surrender, on the supposition that both its colleagues will keep within the limits of the law. But it proceeds throughout on the supposition that none of these things will occur; *that their occurrence will be prevented by their possibility*; that none of the three parties will be forgetful of their duties, or be disposed to push their rights to an extreme; that each will bear and forbear; that all will join in masking the impossibilities of the constitution, and avoiding the collisions which its theory makes so easy; and that all, like the reverential children of the frail patriarch of old, will concur in covering, with a decent and respectful drapery, the nakedness of their common parent.

But what would be the result were the English machine to be worked by French hands? Each of the three co-ordinate authorities would assert its power to

the utmost. Each would make use of its large portion to seize the whole. The peers would put on the drag at the slightest opposition to their will. The Commons would stop the supplies on the most trivial provocation. The sovereign would employ the army to levy the taxes and subdue the people. The parliament would impeach the minister, and the monarch would insult and defy them by giving him a free pardon. The whole would be at a dead-lock in a month. The opposing forces would substitute mutual antagonism for mutual control; and the result would be, not a *diagonal* as with us, but simply a checkmate — not a medial movement, but an absolute stoppage. The *ultima ratio* which we have staved off for centuries, would be reached by Frenchmen in a single session. — Representative government, then, we say, embodies the essence, breathes the atmosphere, lives the life of COMPROMISE. But the French hate compromise. The very idea of it disgusts them. What they are they like to be completely. What they have, they like to have to themselves, without colleague or without competitor. A possession which they hold only in concert, with equal co-proprietors, has few charms for them. The Legitimists are unwilling to replace their sovereign on the throne, on any basis but that of divine right, and absolute authority. In their notion he would be degraded if he owed his crown to the summons of the people, or shared his power with a new aristocracy, or a popular assembly. The *bourgeoisie* in like manner would ignore the nobles, and reduce them to a nullity. And the democracy, equally exclusive and intolerant, cannot imagine that the mass of the people can be rightfully called on to admit the existence or recognise the claims of any other party, and insist upon an exclusive, absolute, and uncontrolled dominion. Guizot, in his Treatise on Democracy, seized this peculiarity of France with the quick instinct of a master's eye.

"Peace is impossible," he says (for the word *peace* we would substitute *representative constitutionalism*), "so long as the various classes and political parties whom our society comprises, nourish the hope of mutually destroying each other, and possessing an exclusive empire. This is the evil which, since 1789, torments us continually, and overthrows us periodically. The monarchic, aristocratic, and democratic elements, have not accepted or recognised each other, but have toiled for their reciprocal exclusion. Constitution, laws, administration, have been in turn directed, like engines of war, to the destruction of one or other party. It has been a 'war to the knife,' in which neither of the combatants believed it possible to live if his rival was still erect and breathing by his side."

French exclusiveness and hatred of compromise, then, is the first reason why representative institutions have not flourished in France. But there is another and a yet deeper cause. Their revolutions have always begun at the wrong end. They have looked only to one point, and that not the primary, nor the most essential one. They have begun their reforms with institutions, not with individuals. They have thought it sufficient to reconstruct society in the aggregate, without modifying or amending the units which compose it. They forgot in their earliest efforts, and have never paused to remember since, that the concrete mass must represent and resemble the materials of which it is made up; and that if the individuals are corrupt, selfish, violent, and impure, the community cannot be firm, peaceable, dignified, or noble. Accustomed to trace their evils to their institutions, taught alike by their writers and their orators to cast upon empty forms the burden of their ingrained sins, they conceived that a change of institutions and of forms would work those miracles, which are the slow and painful product of private

virtue and individual exertion; of patient toil, and more patient endurance — of mutual respect, and mutual love. They imagined they could reform society without first reforming themselves. Hence all their schemes and constitutions have been projects for obtaining the reward without the effort — the victory without the conflict or the sacrifice; for dispensing with indispensable qualifications in place of eliciting or exercising them; for doing great actions without first training great souls; for seeking in the barren and narrow range of the mechanical, what can only be found in the rich resources of the moral world. They worked for the salvation of the individual without requiring his participation in the task. Fatal blunder! They imagined that men might be rendered free and equal by destroying external barriers and striking off material chains; they did not perceive that freedom and equality have their sole roots and guarantees within the *man*. They abolished the *ancien régime*; but they abolished it in vain, while each man carried his *ancien régime* within himself. The old vices, the old corruption, the old selfishness, the old ambition, the old passion for material enjoyments, the old incapacity for silent and elevated patriotism, still survived, and were never struck at or fairly encountered: how then should not the old anomalies re-appear? The garments were torn and buried; but the body and the life remained. Now, as surely as the laws of Providence are constant and inexorable, so surely can there be, for nation or for individual, no short cut to a goal which God has placed at the end of a toilsome and appointed path; no mechanical contrivances for the attainment of an end which is the allotted reward of moral effort and self-denying virtue; no human fiat for the gratuitous bestowal of blessings for which heaven has appointed a hard and heavy purchase-money. The functions of

government — self-government as well as every other — demand qualifications, negative and positive, of no ordinary kind; qualifications which are not inherent or innate; qualifications for which the demand by no means always calls forth the supply. The mere possession of power confers neither capacity nor virtue to exercise it well; and in obtaining the representative institutions that belong to freedom, while still tainted with all the vices of their ancient servitude, the French only seized a treasure of which they had forgotten to secure the key, a weapon of which they had not learned the mastery, a writing in cypher to which they had not got the clue. Caution, humility, obedience to law, long-suffering patience, respect for others' rights, and others' opinions, — these, the *sine qua non* of a constitutional régime, they never dreamed of practising; — aspiring to raise the superstructure, while shirking the preliminary drudgery of laying the foundation.

A third reason why parliamentary government, which has answered so well in England, has answered so ill in France, may be found in the fact, that it harmonises with our habits and institutions, but is wholly discrepant and incongruous with those of our neighbours. We govern ourselves; they are governed by officials. Our whole system is municipal, theirs is bureaucratic. We have already spoken of their centralised administration, and the extent to which it pervades and interpenetrates the daily and domestic life of the nation. In England, the civil servants of the government are few, unconnected, and unobtrusive; in France, they are innumerable, omnipotent, and constitute a separate, organised, and powerful class. In England they confine themselves to absolutely necessary functions; in France they interfere with every transaction and every event of life. In England, as a general rule, a man is only reminded of their existence by the annual visit of the tax-



gatherer, unless, indeed, he has to appeal to the law, or has rendered himself amenable to it; in France, scarcely a day passes, scarcely an operation can be concluded, without coming into contact or collision with one or other of their number. Many of the duties performed by officials on the Continent are here performed by elected, parochial, or municipal functionaries, many are left to individual discretion, many more are not performed at all. With us a man's free will is limited only by his neighbour's free will and his neighbour's rights; in France, as in Austria, it can be exercised only subject to government or police permission previously obtained. Restriction is the exception here; it is the rule there. Throughout the Continent, a citizen cannot engage in business, build a house, or take a journey, without leave; and leave is only to be obtained through an established routine of tedious and annoying formalities which would drive an Englishman frantic.

A second operation of this centralised and over-active bureaucracy, has necessarily been to deprive the people of France of all share in those minor acts of government which should form their education for higher offices and more important functions. They have only the faintest vestiges of those municipal institutions which, with us, are such invaluable normal schools of peaceable agitation and political discussion. They have no local senates to prepare them for the central senate of the nation; or, where such exist, they have no real power, and therefore excite little interest. The officials do everything: the people do nothing. They are associated with none of the acts of government except the highest. They choose no one except their legislative representatives and their executive chief—no one at least whose functions are much more than nominal. Under a bureaucracy, they have, and can have, no opportunity of training themselves in those skilful tactics, those mutual



forbearances, those timely retreats, those judicious compromises, which form the essence of safe and wise political strategies. In a word, they are almost wholly without those real parochial and communal liberties, which are an indispensable preparation for national and republican liberties. Hence, when summoned to the task of self-government by means of a popular assembly, they are like pilots intrusted with the navigation of a ship who have never been at sea before.

In May 1851 we wrote thus:—"Republicanism and bureaucracy are incompatible existences. You may call your state a republic if you will—you may modify its form as you please—you may have two chambers or one—you may place at the head a military dictator, or an elective president holding office for one year, for four years, or for ten;—but so long as the administration of public affairs remains central and bureaucratic, the utmost that full representation or universal suffrage can give, is the power of choosing the particular set of busy bodies who shall rule you, or rather the irresponsible individual who shall appoint them. It is not liberty, but merely the selection of your head oppressor. Thus France is in a radically false position, and she has not yet found it out; she is endeavouring unconsciously to unite two incompatibilities. Her government has all the finished and scientific organisation of a despotism, with the political institutions which belong to freedom. Each man has a share in the choice of his legislator and his executive chief; each man is the depositary of a calculable fraction of the sovereign power; but each man is the slave of the passport office, the prefect, the gendarme, and the policeman. The republic of to-day may wake and find itself an empire to-morrow—scarcely an individual Frenchman would *feel* the difference—and not one iota of the administration need be changed. As it exists

now, it was the child and may be the parent of imperialism. The whole machinery of autocratic rule is at all times ready for the hand of any one who can seize it."

What a commentary on our prediction has the revolution of the 2nd of December afforded! Surely it should teach France the soundness of our present position—viz., that she cannot serve two masters; she cannot at the same moment "fill her cup from the mouth and from the source of the Nile." *She cannot be at once representative and bureaucratic.* If she desires parliamentary government, she must abolish centralisation. But it is beyond dispute that this system of administration, which to us seems so intolerable, is singularly popular in France; and that parliaments, which appear to us so indispensable, are by no means popular. The one system is indigenous, and is, therefore, welcome and stable: the other is an exotic, and, therefore, takes no root, shows no stamina, can arrive at no permanency or durability. It did not grow out of the people's wants: it does not harmonise with the people's sentiments. What France wants is what Napoleon gave her—viz., a firm and all-penetrating administrative system, with municipal bodies and national assemblies, whose functions were limited to the representation of grievances;—and, in addition, she wants what he did not give her—and what yet remains a desideratum—a guarantee against the misgovernment of arbitrary power. Now, we in England are too apt to fall into the natural but somewhat pedantic error of supposing that this guarantee is afforded, and can only be afforded, by representative institutions. Yet the whole history of France since her first revolution might have taught us our mistake. She had representative institutions in 1793; yet they did not secure her against the most grinding tyranny which was ever imposed upon a people

—a tyranny which was known and proved to be that of a minority—a tyranny, nevertheless, which it required the bloodshed and the *coup* of the 9th Thermidor to overthrow. She had representative institutions in 1799; yet they did not protect her against the wretched misgovernment of the Directory, nor against the daring conspiracy by which, on the 18th Brumaire, both they and the Directory were superseded. Representative institutions did not protect France against the arbitrary decrees of Charles X., nor against the necessity of a revolution to dethrone him. They did not enable her to extort reform from Louis Philippe without the same bloody and rudimental expedient. Finally, they did not protect her from the violent usurpation of the President in December last. She has tried them under every form and modification; and under none have they superseded the necessity of revolutions;—*under none have they enabled her to dispense with the same rude and primitive mode of expressing dissatisfaction and desire of change which is resorted to by nations to whom parliaments and ballot-boxes are unknown.* They are effective to preserve the rights and liberties of citizens only where patriotism and a sense of justice are so paramount that instruments cannot be found to trample upon them. They are powerful to deter bad rulers from misgovernment, only when it is known that misgovernment will not be borne. The same *coup d'état* which has overturned the government in France might have taken place in England just as well, if the monarch had been wicked enough to attempt it, the parliament discredited enough to provoke it, the army subservient enough to enact it, the people base enough or wearied enough to submit to it. A representative system contains “the form but not the power” of freedom. It offers no security except on the assumption—true with us, false with our neighbours—that the parties con-

cerned in it will be kept within its limits by a sense of duty, or a sense of fear. A King of England could not have acted as the President of France has done, not because the parliament and the law forbade him, but simply because the army would not have assaulted the parliament or disobeyed the law, and because the people would not tamely have endured either violation. Representative institutions are merely an established mode of manifesting to the ruler the resolution of the nation. Other simpler, louder, and more cogent modes of manifesting this resolution may be found—not indeed suited to our meridian, but possibly to the meridian of France. This louder language is what France always speaks in whether she has a parliament or not. A central executive chief, chosen by the free vote of the whole people, and liable at any time or at stated intervals to be cashiered by a reversal of that vote if he loses national confidence or incurs national condemnation, may possibly enough be a better system of government for France than any she has yet tried. “But where is the security (we are asked) that such adverse vote will be submitted to by a powerful chief?” True; but in reply we ask—“Have we found that representative assemblies have afforded any such security?” And may not the whole matter be summed up in this brief decision, that no mode of expressing the national will will ever obtain submissive acquiescence, or reach the undisputed dignity of a sacred and supreme decree, till the whole people, those who command as well as those who obey, those who succumb as well as those who prevail, are penetrated and imbued with a paramount love of justice, a noble servitude to duty, and a solemn reverence for law. When these qualities reign universal and despotic, almost any form of government will suffice to embalm freedom and insure greatness; till these are acquired and maintained, the

wisest system of policy ever devised by the most profound and subtle intellect of man can secure them no liberty and bring them no rest.\*

\* We particularly recommend to our readers the following quotations from one of the greatest historians and political thinkers of our time:—

“The English in the 16th century were, beyond all doubt, a free people. They had not indeed the outward show of freedom; but they had the reality. They had not as good a constitution as we have; but they had that without which the best constitution is as useless as the king’s proclamation against vice and immorality, that which without any constitution keeps rulers in awe—force, and the spirit to use it. . . . A modern Englishman can hardly understand how the people can have had any real security for good government under kings who levied *benevolences* and chid the House of Commons as they would have chid a pack of dogs. People do not sufficiently consider that, though the legal checks were feeble, the natural checks were strong. There was one great and effectual limitation on the royal authority—the knowledge that, if the patience of the nation were severely tried, the nation would put forth its strength, and that its strength would be irresistible.

“The Irish are better represented in parliament than the Scotch, who, indeed, are not represented at all. [This was written before 1832.] But are the Irish better governed than the Scotch? Surely not. But this only proves that laws have no magical or supernatural virtue; that priestcraft, ignorance, and the rage of contending factions may make good institutions useless; that intelligence, sobriety, industry, moral freedom, firm union, may supply in a great measure the defects of the worst representative system. A people whose education and habits are such that, in every quarter of the world, they rise above the mass of those with whom they mix, as surely as oil rises to the top of water; a people of such temper and self-government that the wildest popular excesses recorded in their history partake of the purity of judicial proceedings and the solemnity of religious rites! a people whose high and haughty spirit is so forcibly described in the motto which encircles their thistle;—such a people cannot be long oppressed. Any government, however constituted, must respect their wishes, and tremble at their discontents. . . . They will be better governed under a good constitution than under a bad constitution. But they will be better governed under the worst constitution than some other nations under the best. In any general classification of constitutions, that of Scotland must be reckoned as



The cultivation of these qualities, then, and of the virtues which are allied to them and foster them, is the first necessity of the national life of France. For this process the two requisites are time and rest. The whole morale of France is fearfully perverted and disorganised; *how* fearfully, we endeavoured to describe in a previous Paper. The very alphabet of the decalogue has to be revived. Religion has to restore its influence and re-assert its claims. Literature has to be rescued from its grotesque deformities and its hideous pollutions, to be cleansed from its old abominations, and inspired with a diviner life. The foundations of social existence have to be purified and renovated. The school-time and apprenticeship of political action have to be passed through. But how can religion flourish or be heard amid the miserable intrigues or the sanguinary conflicts of balanced factions? How can the moral standard of a people be raised and cleared amid the tumults of passions constantly excited, and of strife unceasingly renewed? How can literature rise into a purer atmosphere, or breathe a calmer tone, or spread abroad the soothing influence of a serener spirit, when "the loud transactions of the outlying world" keep the cultivated circles in a perpetual fever, which makes all wholesome food distasteful, and all moderate and gentle stimuli insipid? An interval of repose, a breathing time of recollection and recovery, seems to be demanded alike in the name of the material and the spiritual interests of France—alike for the development of her physical resources, and the renovation of her moral life;—a period during which a new generation might grow up, nurtured amid all the sweet sanctities of domestic life,

one of the worst—perhaps the worst—of Christian Europe. Yet the Scotch are not ill governed. And the reason simply is that they will not bear to be ill governed."—Macaulay, *Lord Burleigh and his Times*.

played upon by all the countless influences of social peace, and sheltered from the angry passions and turbulent emotions which muddled and distracted the existences of their fathers and their grandfathers;—a stable rule, against which rebellion would be madness;—a settled law, which should no longer leave obedience or disobedience an open question;—a government which all could respect, and which the bad should fear;—and such just civil and moderate political rights as might be enjoyed and strengthened, and be gradually augmented as they were exercised and mastered:—these seem now what France requires, and what her new ruler, if he be either wise or patriotic, might bestow.

That the French nation as a whole is ardently, though vaguely, attached to the great idea of the first revolution, there can, we think, be no reasonable doubt. But there may be great doubt whether French politicians are not as pedantic in supposing that this idea necessarily involves a republic, as English politicians are in conceiving all liberty to be bound up in parliamentary forms. The two prolific principles established in 1789 were, first, the sovereignty of the people; and, secondly, the inadmissibility of a privileged class. Now neither of these principles require that a republic, *according to our notion of one*, should be the form of government selected. They merely require that it shall not be an oligarchy; and that, whatever it be, it shall emanate from the people. Many months ago we were assured by a very intelligent Parisian, that "*La France est républicaine et Bonapartiste*;" and that the two were by no means incongruous or incompatible. That France should at one and the same moment cling to a republic, and to the name and memory of the man who destroyed the republic, who rose upon its ruins, and replaced it by one of the most iron and autocratic despotisms the world ever saw, seems at first sight to involve a contradiction; but the



inconsistency and improbability will vanish when we reflect that Napoleon professed to complete the idea of a republic, and to govern in its name — that he took especial care to receive each successive elevation through the forms of a popular election — that a Frenchman's notion of liberty is not personal freedom, but political equality — that a republican form of government is chiefly dear to him as embodying this inaccurate and incomplete conception — and that his bugbear, his *bête noire*, his pious abomination, is not a chief or master, but a privileged order. He dislikes and dreads an aristocracy, not an autocracy. A nominal Commonwealth, even with an arbitrary despot like Napoleon at its head, provided it be in any sense, whether tacitly or formally, the nation's choice, satisfies a Frenchman's confused and misty ideal. This singular union of what seem to Englishmen two opposed and mutually excluding conditions of polity — republican institutions and imperial sway — is embodied in a most characteristic manner in much of the current coinage of France. Every old five-franc piece contains what we should call an Irish bull. All the money coined under the empire bears "*République Française*" on the one side, and "*Napoléon Empereur*" on the reverse. The face of the coin affirms a fact; the back gives it a point-blank contradiction.

We believe the coin so marked to be a faithful representation of the mind of the great mass of the French people, and to speak their real sentiments. An emperor stamped upon a republic! A regal, central, powerful, brilliant chief, elected or confirmed by popular suffrage. Not freedom from control, but the selection of the great controller. Napoleon understood this well. Chosen by the people, at first by a sort of general acclamation, and afterwards by an almost universal vote, he believed himself, and we believe him to have been, a truer representative of their wishes and opinions than any

assembly that was ever elected. Strong in the strength of this conviction, and confident in his perfect comprehension of the requirements of his country, he framed that wonderful administrative organisation of which we have already spoken, and promulgated the constitution under which, with some modifications, France lived so long. The principle of that constitution was that of a strong and concentrated executive, aided by all the enlightenment and assistance it could derive from the practical knowledge and experience of the ablest men in the country. Napoleon refused no advice, but permitted no interference. The idea never entered into his head of ingrafting upon one another two things as distinct in their origin and as discordant in their operation as the centralised administration, so peculiarly French, and the parliamentary *régime*, so peculiarly British. He looked upon the senate, the legislative body, the council of state, the local and departmental councils, as collections of men from whom he could gain much useful information, and much valuable aid; he never recognised their right to shackle his administrative action, or to step out of their narrow and allotted province. With regard to the provincial councils, he wished that they should be listened to with deference and patience. One of the prefects of the Côte d'Or having failed to listen with due respect to the representations of the municipal body, Napoleon sent him a severe and grave rebuke. But when the council-general of the Haute Garonne, in the same year, took upon it to criticise a portion of the system of taxation then established, he snubbed it most unmercifully, and explained very clearly to its members the nature and limits of their functions, as follows:—

“ Les conseils généraux ne sont point institutés pour donner leurs avis sur les lois et sur les décrets. Ce n'est pas là le but de leur réunion. On n'a ni le besoin ni la volonté de leur demander de conseils.

“Ils ne sont et ne peuvent être que des conseils d'administration. Dans cette qualité, leurs devoirs se bornent à faire connaître comment les lois et les décrets sont exécutés dans leurs départemens. Ils sont autorisés à représenter les abus qui les frappent, soit dans les détails de l'administration particulière des départemens, soit dans la conduite des administrateurs; mais ils ne doivent les faire qu'en considérant ce qui est ordonné par les lois ou par les décrets, comme étant le mieux possible.

“Un homme qui sort de la vie privée pour venir passer trois ou quatre jours au chef-lieu de son département fait une chose également inconvenante et ridicule lorsqu'il se mêle de comparer ce qui existe en vertu des lois de l'administration générale actuelle avec ce qui existait dans un autre temps, et lorsqu'à la faveur de quelques observations utiles sur l'administration particulière de son département, il se permet des observations critiques et incohérentes. . . . Sans doute, il a été des temps, où la confusion de toutes les idées, la faiblesse extraordinaire de l'administration générale, les intrigues, qui l'agitaient, faisaient penser à beaucoup de citoyens isolés, qu'ils étaient plus ages que ceux qui les gouvernaient, et qu'ils avaient plus de capacité pour les affaires. *Ce temps n'est plus. L'Empereur n'écoute personne que dans la sphère des attributions respectives.*”

We are far from saying or thinking that the amount of political liberty, and of participation in national affairs, which Napoleon allowed even at the commencement of his consulate, can or ought permanently to satisfy a people like the French. But it well deserves the dispassionate consideration both of our own *doctrinaires* and our continental imitators, whether a sounder and higher ultimate result may not be obtained by commencing from such moderate germs of political freedom and civil action as may in time, by degrees, and through a process of extorted concessions, be ripened and expanded into an ample and fitting constitution, than by starting with such a constitution ready made—on paper; whether it would not be wise for Frenchmen to follow our example in the slow, painful, and laborious steps by which we have achieved and

wrung out our liberties—practising them as we won them—consolidating them as we went along—rather than to grasp at the finished treasure, without learning the lessons which teach its value, or acquiring the mastery over it which confers its value and guarantees its security. As in the grand old fictions of the Rosicrucian fancy, those aspirants after superhuman power and earthly immortality—who seized prematurely on the arch-gift and inhaled the rich elixir, before a long course of strengthening toil, purifying abstinence from earthly passions, and resolute crucifixion of all low desires, had fitted their frames to breathe a rarer atmosphere, and gaze upon intenser light—were stricken into insanity or dazzled into blindness by the awful revelation and the intolerable stimulus, so surely do the exciting air, the intoxicating draught, the wild delight, the terrible power of liberty, ask for their healthy endurance and their noble exercise, preparation scarcely less tedious and elaborate, a soul scarcely less purified and strengthened. To gaze upon the splendour before the sight is purged and fortified, is to rush not into light, but into darkness.\*

If Louis Napoleon, as both his writings and his actions appear to indicate, takes the same view of the needs and capabilities of France which we have here endeavoured to explain, and if he be really animated by that partially pure patriotism which consists in wishing to connect his name indissolubly with the grandeur and regeneration of his country, we believe that he *may* yet employ his tenure of power in a manner which will cause its origin to be forgotten and forgiven. That he *will* do so, is rather our hope than our sanguine expectation. It is what one of their own philosophers de-

\* "Constitutions," said Sir James Mackintosh, "*cannot be made; they must grow.*" In this profound aphorism we may learn the secret of French failures.

scribed a future state to be, *un grand peut-être*. It certainly seems somewhat foolish to fancy that a man who has attained his supremacy by violence should use that supremacy for good. It seems the very simplicity of sanguineness to expect that a man who, in marching to his end, has trampled all legality under foot, should, when that end has been reached, proclaim, enforce, and submit to legality in future. It is the curse and the punishment of guilt, in public even more than in private life, that one crime almost always necessitates another and another. It is difficult for a usurper to control and restrain the tools of his usurpation. It is difficult for the victor in a civil strife to restore freedom and power of action to the vanquished. It is difficult for a chief whose conduct is open to the harshest criticism and the bitterest invective, to permit fair license to the tongues and pens of his antagonists. Nevertheless, on his ability and courage to dare all this — *in a while*, depends Louis Napoleon's exoneration and success. We cannot too often repeat that he owes a great expiation to his country. He has committed a deliberate act of violence and treason, which can be pardoned only on condition of its being the last. He has seized power in a manner which only the beneficial use he makes of it can induce history to forget or gild. Yet it is undeniable that he has examples before him of others who have stolen a sceptre and yet have wielded it in the service of their country. It is still left for him, by imitating their excellences and avoiding their errors, to throw a veil over all that is deplorable and disreputable in the past. Augustus waded to a throne through an amount of bloodshed and of perfidy of which Louis Napoleon has given us only a faint and feeble reflex; yet by giving to Rome a long respite from sixty years of civil strife and tyrannous dominion, by developing her resources, re-organising her empire, cultivating her intelligence, and laying the



foundation for 350 years of peace, he has left behind him a name associated for ever with an age of political and literary glory. Cromwell dismissed a parliament scarcely less despised or discredited than that of France, with a degree of violence and ignominy as great as Louis Napoleon inflicted; yet he governed better, and raised the name of England higher, than any sovereign had done since the Great Queen. In 1799 Napoleon drove out the Council of Five Hundred by the actual use of the bayonet, and installed himself as First Consul by an autocratic fiat and a military force; yet his name is still dear to France—less on account of that long series of splendid campaigns, which brought her at first so much glory, and afterwards so much discomfiture and mortification—than because, for the first time since 1789, he gave her a strong and settled government; because he made her feel that she had a master-hand and a sagacious pilot at the helm; because he gave her rest from intrigues, conspiracies, and the wearisome and humiliating succession of imbecilities which had so long misruled her; because he restored, under wise and stern conditions, her shattered and desecrated altars; because, lastly and chiefly, he reorganised the dissolved and decrepit system of administration on a basis which has never since been shaken, and educed order out of chaos. Louis Napoleon may find in the history of his predecessors something of example, but far more of warning. Three especial errors he must guard against: he must avoid that love of war and too exclusive reliance on the army, which eventually lost Napoleon his crown; he must avoid the reaction towards priestcraft and the dread of a free press, which led to the overthrow of Charles X.; and that neglect of the sentiments and demands of the middle classes, which prepared the way for the ignominious catastrophe of Louis Philippe.

*First*, If Louis Napoleon relies exclusively on the troops to support his government he will commit a fatal blunder. They cannot be trusted in to coerce the nation. They may be relied on for a *coup d'état* against an Assembly respected by no one, deserted by the *bourgeoisie*, and abused by the working classes; but assuredly they cannot be relied on for a systematic crusade against the liberties, feelings, and affections of their fellow-citizens. It has been all along pretty well understood, that, though ready enough to fight against *émeutiers* and socialists of Blanqui's caste, they could never be relied upon to put down any insurrection in which the National Guard sided with the masses. In each individual instance, in each sudden crisis, the habit of obedience and the recollection of their military oath would probably prevail, and cause them to obey the orders of their immediate superiors. But this would no longer be the case as soon as they had time to consult and discuss among themselves, and as soon as they perceived that they were made the tools of a regular system inimical to those whom they loved, and to whose ranks they belonged, and to the interests of that nation of which they formed a recognised and sympathising part. They soon learn and strongly retain the instinct of discipline and the *esprit du corps*; but they never wholly lose the sentiment of citizenship. French soldiers are not, like English ones, chosen from the lowest portion of the populace, and enlisted virtually for life. The conscription takes them nearly indiscriminately from all ranks, and they serve, or are required to serve, only for seven years. After that time, unless they wish otherwise, they return to mingle with the mass of their fellow-citizens. The result of this is twofold: first, that they retain most of the feelings and predilections of the classes out of which they were called yesterday, and into which they will be re-



absorbed to-morrow; and, secondly, that France swarms with thousands of trained and disbanded soldiers, equal in skill and experience to those actually enrolled, but as full of political interests and predilections as any of their compatriot civilians. Thus the army in France is not, as in England, a distinct body set apart from the nation, and having no feelings and opinions that are not bounded by the barrack-walls. It is merely that portion of the people which in each particular year chances to be under arms. One-seventh of them were simple citizens—sons, brothers, husbands, before everything—last year; one-seventh of them again become simple citizens—sons, brothers, husbands, before everything—this year. The idea of using them against the NATION, it would therefore be folly in Louis Napoleon to entertain.

The officers of the army, again, are chosen from among those middle classes out of whose hands the late *coup d'état* is supposed to have wrested power. They belong to these classes, they marry into them, they frequent their society, share their feelings, imbibe their sentiments. Like them, they read the newspapers, and feel the deprivation when newspapers are suppressed. In proportion to their rank and education will be their susceptibility to all those social influences which will make them reluctant and unsafe tools for resolute misgovernment.

Moreover, the moment the army perceives that Louis Napoleon's government depends on it alone, that moment it becomes supreme, exacting, jealous, and tyrannical. That moment also it becomes the arena of the most desperate personal intrigues. That moment gives to Louis Napoleon a score of formidable rivals. He is a civilian. He has won his spurs in no memorable battle; and it is only a military chief who can reign by the sword. If the army is to be the centre and instrument

of power, there are many who have a better title than he has to seize it. If, therefore, he relies on the army alone, as an instrument of misgovernment, he is leaning on a spear which will break and pierce him.

Above all, Louis Napoleon must beware of so far misreading the history of the great man whose name he bears, as to look to war either for safety or for power. Let the nephew well understand and lay to heart the real foundations of the uncle's glories,—the true reason why the mere name is one of such magic,—the true reason why that name secured his own election, while yet an unknown or an ill-known man. It was not Napoleon's military, but his *civil*, services that made him the idol of the nation from 1800 to 1804; it was a repetition, not of his military, but of his civil services, that, in 1848, France looked for from his nephew, when she chose him as her chief at a moment when a similar confusion to that which Napoleon had closed seemed to call for a similar elucidation, and made the people turn with hope and affection to the mere echo of a great name. Napoleon's military career, magnificent and brilliant as it was, exhausted the nation, wearied the army, carried mourning and desolation into every family: Napoleon's military grandeur all passed away, and left France no wider, no greater, no richer than he found her. But his *Code Civil* has maintained its ground in every country where he planted it; his clear and simple coinage has been everywhere adopted and confirmed by the sovereigns whom he had ejected, and who returned after his defeat; and his elaborate and scientific system of centralised administration has never once been shaken or meddled with by any of the monarchs or revolutions that have succeeded him. The trophies of war have all perished: the trophies of peace have all survived. The former made France miserable: the latter have made her a celebrity and an example. The

former landed Napoleon in a wretched banishment, and gave

“His name a doubt to all the winds of Heaven:”

the latter placed him high among the permanent benefactors of mankind.

To Louis Napoleon, situated as he is, a war would probably be about the most shallow and suicidal policy he could pursue. In the first place, till firmly and fairly established on his new throne, a foreign war would only let loose his domestic foes. No wise chief will march against an enemy, if he leaves half-subdued treason and angry discontent behind him in his own camp. In the second place, a war undertaken in these days must either be a war against despots with insurgents for allies; or a war against freedom with despots for allies. A war of the first kind would not only concentrate against the President all the continental powers, but would involve him in a net of incongruities and perplexities which would aggravate tenfold the perplexities of his actual position. It could be successful only by the aid of those republican parties in Hungary, Italy, and Prussia whose equivalents and *analoga* in France he had just repressed with such stern severity. He, the military usurper, the violent destroyer of a free constitution, would have to hoist the banner of liberty, and march to the watchword of the people's war-cry. The hero of the *coup d'état*, the prisoner of inviolable deputies, the gaoler of popular generals, would have to proclaim everywhere liberty to the captive, and the restoration of rights to the oppressed. If, on the other hand, he joined the European autocrats, and made war on liberty, and on England, Belgium, and Sardinia as its representatives, he would commit a still more fatal blunder. A war with England would be very popular, no doubt, with many French-

men, but it would be hateful to many more. It would be a proclamation of deliberate hostility against the cause of constitutional rights and liberties all over the world. It would bring him, the representative and chief of a nation which still clings to the ideas of the first great revolution, into close alliance with the old worn-out tyrannies of Europe, and degrade him into the ape and flunkey of the withered legitimacy of the world. It would bring the republic of France, which swears by universal suffrage, into direct collision with every state in which any vestige of popular election yet survives. It would involve her in a crusade against the freedom for which she has fought so gallantly, and suffered and sacrificed so much. Such a war would be absolutely detestable to all the better spirits of the French nation—to the intelligent classes whom it is so important for Louis Napoleon to conciliate to his *régime*—to the moderate as well as the extreme—to all, except those who love plunder, and those who are thirsty for revenge. The republicans of France sympathise deeply with the struggling patriots of every land. To them the expedition against Rome was the most hateful act of the Assembly. The Orleanists and Moderates feel that they must make common cause with the supporters of free constitutions and limited monarchy throughout the globe. The nation as a whole feel that, if the great contest and victory of 1789 is to bear any fruit—if it is not to be regarded as a gigantic and insane blunder—if it was an emancipation to be gloried in, not a crime to be repented of—France must remain the ally and champion of national independence and popular rights, wherever they may be asserted. To espouse the cause of despotism, to attack the free states of Europe, would be to blaspheme the past, to deny her mission, to desecrate her flag. For France to league with the Russian autocrat, the Prussian perjurer, the

Austrian tyrant against constitutional England and Sardinia, and republican America and Switzerland, would indeed be for "the dog to return to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

A war must either be successful or unsuccessful; in either event it would be fatal to Louis Napoleon's supremacy. If unsuccessful, the French would never forgive him for having provoked it. The army would desert him; the people would despise him; the gentry would hate him; the whole nation would cry out against him; every private interest and every patriotic passion would combine to assail him; and the very foundations of his power would crumble away like sand. If, on the other hand, the war were to be glorious and triumphant, it would insure his downfall as infallibly, though from another cause. Louis Napoleon is not a soldier. His army must be intrusted to the leadership of the ablest generals he can appoint. His victories must be won by others. He must select for the supreme command, not the men he can rely upon as devoted to himself, but the men whom the public voice or the desire of the troops shall proclaim to be most fitted for the post. The first brilliant exploit will give him a rival. The first glorious campaign will designate his dethroner and successor. He may give the signal for war; but others will reap its laurels, others will gather in its fruits, others will monopolise its glory. A war would at once place the very men whom he has just circumvented, insulted, and imprisoned, at the head of the army, by means of which he has climbed to power. A war would at once place Cavaignac, Changarnier, Bedeau, and Lamoricière above him. And if one of these should display any portion of that political and administrative genius, which the life of camps so often develops, and affords so many opportunities of manifesting; if he should be gifted with that

terse and stirring eloquence which soldiers often possess ; and if solid and practical capacity should give him over the reason of his countrymen, that ascendant which his victories have already given him over their imagination, — then, assuredly, Louis Napoleon would have found his master, and the Assembly its merciless avenger.

*Secondly*, Louis Napoleon must especially guard himself against the very probable mistake of supposing, that because he has the support of the army and of the masses — of the numerical majority, and of the organised forces of the nation — he can afford to despise the hostility, or dispense with the allegiance, of the middle and educated classes. He has already given some indications of his tendency to fall into this error. He is said to be contemplating the abolition of the vexatious and burdensome *octroi*, the imposition of an income-tax, and the promotion of extensive public works, with a view to satisfy the poorer classes. But measures of this sort will not suffice. The great body of the ignorant peasantry have indeed voted for him as representing in their minds the cause of order, and the brilliant recollections of the Consulate and the Empire. Large numbers of the working people in the towns have also voted for him under the impression that he will unite the two incompatibilities, of a large remission of taxation, and a vigorous increase of public expenditure. But these alone cannot maintain him. The town ranks of all sections are always unreasonable in their expectations from a new *régime*, and therefore certain to encounter disappointment, and to change their admiration into disgust. Moreover, in no country, least of all in France, can the contest ever be a hopeful one for despotism, when all the cultivation and intelligence of the nation is on one side, and only brute numbers on the other. In no strife in modern days is the *major vis* ever on the side of the *mere* numerical majority. The skill,



knowledge, discipline, mental influence, intellectual resources, and moral weight, of the middle and upper ranks, will always be an immense over-match for mere masses of ignorant, untrained, and stupid *prolétaires*. Louis Napoleon, therefore, must govern so as to conciliate the adherence of the worthy writers, the financiers, and the literary and political notabilities of France—the natural leaders of her people,—the representatives of her material interests and her moral power.

Now, to these classes, material interests are not the only ones, nor social comfort and physical wellbeing the sole necessities of existence. Selfish and worldly as too many of them are, they cannot live by bread alone. They demand a scope for their activity, an arena for their talents. They will no longer be content with the old frivolities of the theatre and the *salon*. They have eaten of the tree of political knowledge; and, henceforth, the paradise of the senses and the fancy is disenchanted in their eyes. They have known the fascinations of political action, and will not again acquiesce in being utterly debarred from it. It will be dangerous to attempt to re-convert them into cyphers, and impossible to confine their energies within the poor and narrow circle of social trifling which once sufficed. The President must reckon with this natural ambition, and this rational activity. His new constitution must be such as to offer an adequate and worthy field for the power and aspirations of the practical intellect of France. His administration must provide places wherein the capacities of the restless and the ardent may find ample, safe, and serviceable development. He must prove to the rising and the experienced politicians of the country, that the new system offers great prizes for the ambitious, wide scope for the active, noble occupation for the high-minded. He must show them that there are worthier and loftier vocations for the trained and ripened intel-

lect than party squabbles, or parliamentary intrigues, in aiding the action of the state, and developing the resources of the country. His cabinet must be a place where genuine ability of every kind may find an entrance. His senate must be an assembly to which it will not be a degradation to belong. His house of representatives must be a body entitled to speak freely and discuss without reticence and fear.

Further, Louis Napoleon must remember that the educated classes will not long endure to be debarred from the full privileges and enjoyments of their education. It is idle to imagine that men gifted with the wonderful power of precise and brilliant expression, which distinguishes the French, will not chafe and rebel if condemned to an enforced silence, or compelled to restrain their utterances within limits, or to direct them into channels which it may suit a despot to prescribe. Men conscious of capacity to think worthily and to write splendidly on the exciting questions of government and war, will not tamely permit themselves to be warned off their favourite and chosen fields, and relegated to the duller walks of science or fancy. Genius and talent, in every department of literature, like gunpowder, becomes dangerous by being compressed. They must be enlisted in the service of the government, or they will be arrayed against it, and in the end will be too strong for it. A free press is even a better safety-valve than a free constitution for the restless intellects and fiery tempers of the cultivated classes. In addition to this, we must bear in mind that the French are great readers. The circulation of the Parisian newspapers is far beyond that of the London journals. Books and pamphlets, too, sell there in numbers which appear to us nearly fabulous. M. Granier de Cassagnac is said to have sold 100,000 copies of his recent *brochure*. To most Parisians of any education, and to many provin-

cials, their daily paper, with its brilliant "leader," and its exciting *feuilleton*, is as necessary as their daily breakfast. To deprive them of their habitual intellectual pabulum, or to render it so innutritious and insipid, as it would inevitably become under a censorship, would render the President almost as unpopular with the Parisians as if he were to endeavour, actually and without metaphor, to starve them into allegiance. The support then of the thousand writers, and the million readers of France, Louis Napoleon can only conciliate by respecting, and restoring as soon as it can be done with safety, the freedom of the press.

*Lastly*, and above all, Louis Napoleon must beware of relying on the PRIESTS. They are about the worst, the weakest, and the most treacherous reed upon which he could lean. We regard the tendency he has shown in this direction with more jealousy than any of his other proceedings. It looks like a projected coalition between the two armies of despotism—the military and the ecclesiastical. It is true that one of the saddest and most menacing features of the present aspect of French society is the absence of a religious spirit. It is true that any one who should reanimate religion in the nation would be the greatest of human benefactors. But playing into the hands of the Jesuits will have precisely a contrary effect. They are the notorious and irreconcilable enemies of the central ideas which lay at the bottom of the great French Revolution, and which are still enshrined in the hearts of the whole nation,—viz., the sovereignty of the people, as opposed to the divine right of kings, and the reign of equal justice, as opposed to class privileges. All that the country has of noble in its recent history is arrayed against the priests. All the long years of its degradation and dishonour are associated with their rule. Everything generous and lofty, everything popular and stimulating, in its literature, has proclaimed relentless

war against priestcraft under any form. Right or wrong, priests in general, and Jesuits in particular, are hated by everything in France (except moral ignorance and rare fanaticism, and legitimacy, with its sinister and ulterior designs), as the foes to enlightenment, the upholders of humbug, the allies of despotism, and the serpents who creep into and poison domestic life. The restoration of them, even to most modified and regulated influence, was one of the most daring, difficult, and unpopular of Napoleon's achievements. Notwithstanding the strong reasons which then existed for doing it, notwithstanding the consummate skill and caution with which he did it, it was a reactionary step, which his supporters could hardly tolerate or forgive. The attempt to associate the priests once more to state authority had done much to undermine the influence of Charles X., before their mischievous advice led him to that attack upon the press by which he forfeited his throne. The active intellects of the French nation, in immense preponderance — it is most deplorable that it should be so, but it is so — regard Christianity as a deception and a chimera; and their religious teachers must resemble the archbishop of Paris much more, and the bishop of Chartres much less than the great body of them do at present, before this sad error can be rectified. And so long as this is the case, any truckling to the priests, any favouritism towards them, any signs of an intention to re-impose upon the nation a system which its intellectual leaders believe to be a sham, will be resented as an insult. Christianity itself is a glorious truth as well as a great fact; but to the educated portion of the nation the substitution of priestly despotism in its place represents the system which Rousseau discredited, which D'Alembert, Helvetius, and Condorcet, and all the great literary names connected with the social and political changes of the

18th century, won their fame by contending with and overthrowing. The French may endure the restoration of the imperial despotism — never that of priestly sway. They may again come under the dominion of the Bastile — never under that of the Inquisition. Louis Napoleon could scarcely commit a blunder which will more surely and more righteously combine against him all that is virulent and all that is selfish, all that is noble and all that is vicious, all that loves freedom and all that loves fame, all that loves truth and all that loves power, in the intellectual and social world of France, — than by holding out a hand of favour and alliance to the Jesuits. The army will despise him for it. The *salons* will ridicule and sneer at him for it. The press will hate him for it almost to a man. The stern Puritan Guizot, the unprincipled and brilliant Thiers, the learned, eloquent, and democratic historian Michelet, the richly gifted and artist-minded George Sand, the dignified and honoured philosopher Victor Cousin, even the disgracefully-popular ransacker of moral cesspools and obscene *cloacæ*, Eugene Sue, — men who could join in nothing else, who have scarcely one other sentiment in common, — would all unite in one wild cry of mingled scorn, indignation, and disgust at the ruler who could dream of replacing France under the broken crozier and the stained and tattered surplice of the priest.

Nor could the support of the clergy, thus dearly purchased as it must be, ever be relied on by Louis Napoleon. He can scarcely be weak enough to imagine that an organised hierarchy, whose head and centre is in Rome, can ever give faithful or cordial adherence to a man who has risen on the ruin and succeeded to the inheritance of anointed kings. He cannot believe that the servants of a Church whose first dogma, and whose pervading idea, is the supremacy of divine right, can in their hearts espouse a cause based on military

usurpation, and sanctioned by an appeal to universal suffrage. He cannot flatter himself that the alliance between the child of popular sovereignty and the proclaimers of royal sacredness and inviolability, can ever be more than a treacherous and hollow truce. He must know that, by the necessity of the case, the Catholic clergy — such of them at least as receive their impulse from Rome — are secret and zealous Legitimists; that they regard him only as a warming-pan; and that they propose to use him as the restorer of an edifice which, when ready, the old and rightful heirs are to inhabit, — as the instrument for the recovery of a patrimony which, as soon as it is secured against the common enemy, they intend to transfer to the legal owner. Knowing all this, we can scarcely suppose, however Louis Napoleon may coquet with the Jesuits for a temporary purpose, that he will commit the enormous blunder of calling them into his councils, or sharing with them his power.

We have said that we are not sanguine as to Louis Napoleon's success in the position which he has so violently and unwarrantably seized. The chapter of accidents is always too rich in France to induce us to venture on a prophecy. Our object in this Paper has been to trace the causes which have led to the catastrophe; to explain the reasons why we think the French nation may have been altogether on a wrong tack in their endeavour to naturalise a parliamentary government, to call attention to the irreconcilability of such government with the centralised and bureaucratic administration which is apparently so popular, and is certainly so fixed; and to show how the powers which are held by the President, may be wielded for the benefit of his country, if he be really animated by a patriotic spirit, and gifted with adequate capacities.

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Since this article was in type, the President has published his constitution and fulminated his decrees of banishment. The first we have no time nor space to criticise: the latter we cannot pass over without the expression of our conviction that they are a great blunder, as well as a great crime. Such indiscriminate and illegal severity has alarmed and staggered his supporters, and enraged more than it has terrified his enemies. It is an indication and confession of weakness, — a wanton trampling upon legal forms, — a menacing inauguration of a reign of terror. Already the murmurs of the Parisian *salons* have warned him of his mistake and his danger. Confiscation has now followed proscription, and the whole arsenal of tyranny seems to be opened.

## SHALL WE RETAIN OUR COLONIES? \*

OUR colonial empire — independent of the vast possessions of the East India Company ; independent, also, of the Hudson's Bay Company's territory, and the uncivilised parts of North America — stretches over an area of nearly four million square miles, and includes a population of more than six million souls ; of whom two millions and a half are whites, and one million and a half are of British birth or descent. The distribution of these numbers may be seen more minutely in the following table, where our colonies are classed into groups. The figures for Africa do not include our last acquisitions at the Cape, nor on the Gold Coast. The East Indian colonies mean Mauritius and Ceylon. The population is given for 1846, the last year for which we have any accurate returns. Since then, of course, a very considerable increase has taken place, both by immigration and by natural multiplication.

\* From the "Edinburgh Review."

1. *Speech of Sir W. Molesworth on Colonial Expenditure and Government*, July 25th, 1848.

2. *Speech of Sir W. Molesworth on Colonial Administration*, June 25th, 1849.

3. *Some Particulars of the Commercial Progress of our Colonial Dependencies*. By J. T. DANSON, Barrister-at-Law. (Read before the Statistical Society, Feb. 19th, 1849.)

4. *The Colonies of England*. By J. A. ROEBUCK, M.P. 1849.

5. *Speech of Lord John Russell on Colonial Policy*, Feb. 8th, 1850.

Colonies.	Area in Square Miles.	Population of British Descent.	Total Population.	Average annual Imports. 1842—1846.	Average annual Exports. 1842—1846.
				£	£
North American	486,000	1,100,000	1,995,000	4,847,995	4,188,077
West Indian -	85,000	60,000	936,000	4,511,649	5,496,211
African -	138,000	20,170	475,000	1,039,139	669,846
East Indian -	25,400	6,000	1,680,000	2,259,036	1,648,202
Australian, &c.	3,100,000	300,000	420,000	2,189,982	1,931,132
Total -	3,834,400	1,486,170	5,506,000	£14,847,801	£13,933,468

Now it is abundantly evident that the question of abandoning or retaining an empire such as this — with a commerce equal to one-fourth that of the mother country, with a population equal to one-fifth that of Great Britain and Ireland, and with an area exceeding ours in the ratio of thirty-two to one — is far too momentous to be disposed of at the fag end of a discussion on our annual budget. It demands a time and place to itself: it deserves to be discussed on its own merits; and to be regarded from a higher and more comprehensive point of view than one of mere retrenchment and economy. It is something more than a point to be settled between Mr. Hume on the one side, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the other.

The advocates for cheap government at any cost, with Mr. Cobden and the Financial Reform Association at their head, have resolved upon a reduction of our public expenditure to the amount of ten millions, out of an effective total of twenty-three. The object is one of difficult attainment; and on several recent occasions Mr. Cobden has admitted — and every one will agree with him — that whatever savings may be enforced in various departments, by a closer watchfulness and a stricter control — by a sterner supervision over sanguine experimenters and lavish ship-builders — still, no very material reduction in our chief items of national expenditure — viz., the army, navy, and ordnance — can be

effected, so long as we retain our vast and distant colonial empire. He proposes, therefore, to abandon that empire, *as a measure of economy*; and his mode of reasoning is, as it always is, simple, plausible, and bold, — admirably calculated to produce an impression on a nation impatient of misty declamation, anxious for clear views, and priding itself on its common sense. His arguments are entitled to careful examination; and must be met in a manner as downright and straightforward as his own. The nation neither will nor ought to allow itself to be put off from the most searching inquiry by rhetorical flourishes about the vastness of our empire by a deference to ancestral wisdom, by an appeal to traditional associations and hereditary policy. It is of the last importance that we should clear our minds upon the subject, — should ascertain *whether* our colonies are valuable, and *why* they are valuable; what equivalent in the present or in prospect they yield as a compensation for their cost; in short, whether we are to retain them, and on what ground that retention is to be defended.

But before entering upon a discussion of this question (which we propose to treat as broadly and concisely as we can, to the neglect of all avoidable details), we must premise that we find a difference *in limine* between our views and those of the financial reformers as regards the paramount importance they assign to a mere curtailed amount of national expenditure. The cry for cheap government has been so pertinaciously raised during the last few years; it is supported by so active and energetic a party of politicians; it finds naturally such a ready welcome in the popular mind; it comprises such an indisputable nucleus of truth surrounded by such a vast nebula of plausibility — that it requires no ordinary courage to make head against it, or to hint that it may be carried to an injudicious and

dangerous excess. Nevertheless, it is unquestionable that cheapness *may be bought too dear*; that retrenchment, on a strictly-regulated and already curtailed expenditure, may be as unwise as retrenchment on a lavish expenditure is just and needful; that rigid frugality in public outlay, though always a duty, may not always be the first or paramount duty of the crisis or the hour; that, in fact, there may be more important objects for our consideration than the saving of one or two millions to a people which so frequently spends fifty millions in some wild speculation, or some gigantic blunder. In public affairs, as in private, there is a true and a false — a genuine and a counterfeit — a short-sighted and a comprehensive — economy. There is an economy which looks only to the price, as well as a profuseness which looks only to the object. There is a spirit of shallow, niggard, and ungenerous parsimony, which looks only at the cost of the public service, and not at the mode in which that service is performed; which would risk or sacrifice great objects in order to save a small expense; which is narrowly mercantile, instead of being broadly imperial; which considers an official salary excessive, if any fairly competent person could be found to undertake the duty for less remuneration; which would put the service of the state on the same footing as the supply of a workhouse, and have it done *by tender*; which would starve departments that, to be efficient, require to be managed with a liberal and, at times, even with an unsparing hand; which, in a word, considers only present saving, and disregards the future outlay and ultimate extravagance which injudicious and untimely saving may entail. And there is a wise, sound, and far-sighted economy — alone deserving of the name — which is profoundly convinced that, in an empire such as ours, the best government is the cheapest, whatever be its money cost; which is conscious that where

millions are at stake, thousands must be often disregarded; that expenditure may often be cheaper than saving; that it is both common sense and enlightened economy for the state to secure the services of its ablest citizens, and to keep every department of the public service in the highest condition of efficiency, — whatever be the outlay requisite to attain these purposes.

If the great British nation were, like a private individual, possessed only of a fixed limited income, which no exertion could increase, it would then be matter of simple necessity, as well as duty, to proportion our expenditure to that income, whatever the consequences might be. We should be compelled to organise our servants and our establishments on a scale suited to our means — to leave unattained, however important, objects for which we could not pay the necessary price — to incur perils it would be too costly to provide against — to forego the services of those superior talents which we could not afford to remunerate — to sell off any outlying portion of our estates which led us into heavy expenses, and yielded an insufficient present rental. But this is not our case: not only must we obtain at any price those objects, and do at any cost those deeds, and retain by any expenditure those possessions, which involve our national safety, interests, and honour; but we can well afford to do so. It is idle to say — with our enormous national wealth, with our vast annual accumulations, with our working classes spending fifty-four millions yearly in self-imposed taxation for noxious indulgences, with our mercantile and middle classes flinging away millions after millions, first upon delusive mines, then upon unneeded and unpaying railways — that we cannot afford to do anything which the nation deliberately and conscientiously resolves that it ought to do. It is something more than idle of Mr. Cobden, after having been so mainly instrumental in relieving



us of fiscal burdens estimated at more than twenty-five millions a year, to pretend that we cannot now endure an expenditure which we did endure when our national wealth was only half its present amount, and when our burdens were twice as heavy. If, then, our colonies are to be abandoned, let it not be on the plea that we cannot afford to maintain or defend them. If it be true that no ties of national interest or obligation bind us to retain them, let them go; but if this be the reverse of truth, let us not be terrified into cutting them adrift from any such insane notion as sometimes takes possession of elderly gentlemen of the most enormous wealth, that we are actually insolvent, and that nothing but the most instant and fanatical retrenchment can save us from the workhouse.

Holding these views, we shall not think it necessary to meet the new school of financial reformers, by endeavouring to prove, that the colonies do not cost the mother country as much as is alleged—exaggerated as their estimates often are. We shall point out distinctly the *grounds* on which we regard them as valuable, and think they ought to be retained. We shall not allow our attention to be diverted from the question as a whole, by any discussion of details,—by disputing as to the specific importance or desirability of our settlements at Labuan, at the Falkland Islands, or on the Gold Coast. Neither shall we take into consideration the value of our purely military dependencies and outposts. The importance of these is a military rather than a strictly imperial question. They are part of the details of our system of defences, and their proper place is in a debate on the army and navy estimates, or in consultations in the departments of the War Office or the Horse Guards. We confine ourselves to our colonies, properly so called, respecting which Mr. Cobden is of opinion that, since the recent systematic change in our com-

mercial policy, they are of no value whatever to Great Britain :—respecting which, however, we hold that this change has only altered the point of view from which we are to form our estimate of their value.

The line of argument we have to meet is lucid, plausible, and attractive. It may be stated thus. In former times, and under the old mercantile system, we valued our colonies as outlets for our manufactures, and as sources of supply for needful products which we could not obtain, or could not obtain so cheaply or so well, elsewhere. We valued them as the principal and the surest channels for that commerce which we felt to be the life-blood of the nation. They were secure, increasing, and favoured markets for those articles of British produce which other nations excluded as far as they could by severe and prohibitory tariffs; and they produced for us exclusively those valuable raw materials and articles of luxury which we wished to debar other nations from procuring. In conformity with these ideas, we bound them to the mother country in the bands of a strict and mutually favouring system of customs' duties: we compelled them to trade with us exclusively; to take from us exclusively all the articles with which we could supply them; and to send to us exclusively all the produce of their soil. In return, we admitted their produce to our markets at lower rates than that of other countries, or excluded the produce of other countries altogether. This was a consistent, intelligible, and mutually fair system. Under it our colonies were *customers who could not escape us*, and vendors who could sell to us alone.\*

\* Bryan Edwards thus describes the system :—"The leading principle of colonisation in all the maritime states of Europe (Great Britain among the rest) was commercial monopoly. The word *monopoly* in this case admitted a very extensive interpretation. It

But a new system has risen up, not only differing from the old one, but based upon radically opposite notions of commercial policy. We have discovered that, under this system, our colonies have cost us, in addition to the annual estimate for their civil government and their defence, a sum amounting to many millions a year, in the extra price which we have paid for their produce beyond that at which other countries could have supplied it to us. In obedience to our new and wiser commercial policy, we have abolished all discriminating and protective duties; we have announced to our colonies that we shall no longer favour their productions, and, as a necessary and just corollary, that we shall no longer compel them to favour ours,—that we shall supply ourselves with our sugar, coffee, cotton, and indigo, wherever we can buy them cheapest, and that they are at liberty to follow the same principle in the purchase of their calicoes, silks, and woollens. They are therefore to us now, in a commercial point of view, friendly trading communities, and nothing more. The very object for which we founded, governed, defended, and cherished them, has been abandoned: why, then,

comprehended the monopoly of supply, the monopoly of colonial produce, and the monopoly of manufacture. By the first, the colonists were prohibited from resorting to foreign markets for the supply of their wants; by the second, they were compelled to bring their chief staple commodities to the mother country alone; and by the third, to bring them to her in a raw or unmanufactured state, that her own manufacturers might secure to themselves all the advantages arising from their further improvement. This latter principle was carried so far in the colonial system of Great Britain, as to induce the late Lord Chatham to declare in parliament that the British colonists in America had no right to manufacture even a nail or a horseshoe.”—*History of the West Indies*, vol. ii. p. 565.

“The maintenance of this monopoly,” says Adam Smith (book iv. c. vii.), “has hitherto been the principal, or more properly, perhaps, the sole end and purpose of the dominion which Great Britain assumes over her colonies.”

should we any longer incur the cost of their maintenance?

Being, then, on the footing of independent states, as far as their tariffs are concerned, they yield us nothing and benefit us in nothing as colonies, that they would not yield us and serve us in, were they altogether independent. Nay, they are even less serviceable to us; for the experience of the United States has shown us how immeasurably faster colonies advance in population, in enterprise, in agriculture, and in commerce—in everything which makes them valuable as customers—when separated from the mother country than when still attached to it by the bonds of allegiance and the clumsy fetters of remote and injudicious control. “Our exports to the United States in 1844,” says Sir W. Molesworth, “equalled our real exports to all our other colonies together.”\* Had these states still remained hampered by their connection with Great Britain, is it possible to imagine that they would have advanced with anything like their actual gigantic strides? Seven years after they had declared their independence, their population was short of 4,000,000. By the last census, sixty years later, it had reached 23,675,000 souls,—all customers for our productions.

In the next place, our colonies used to be regarded as inexhaustible storehouses of waste and fertile land, and as outlets for our dense and often suffering population; and it is in this view, perhaps, that most persons are still disposed especially to value them. But what is the fact? Have we not the plainest indications that even in this respect they would be more valuable if they were independent, and that even now the United States,

\* At present, however, this is by no means true. In 1849, the total exports of British produce and manufactures was 58,848,000*l.* of declared value; of which 16,594,000*l.* went to our colonies, and 9,565,000*l.* to the United States.

because independent, are preferred by our emigrants? According to Sir William Molesworth's statement in 1848, of 1,673,600 persons who had emigrated during the preceding twenty years, 825,564 went *direct* to the United States, and how many more went indirectly through Canada, we can only guess. According to the Appendix to Lord John's Speech in 1850, out of 787,410 persons who emigrated in 1847-8-9, 525,136 went to the United States. So it is abundantly clear, that as fields for emigration we can have no motives for the continued retention of our colonies.

Again: we used to make some of our colonies serviceable as prisons for our convicts—distant and safe receptacles for the disposal of our metropolitan villany and filth—places for “burying our dead out of our sight.” *Now* we can use them as such no longer. Our colonists have one and all remonstrated; have refused to receive the sweepings of our gaols any longer; have threatened to rebel, if we persist in sending them;—and we have ourselves, on more than one occasion, admitted the system to be an indefensible one, and have announced our determination to abandon it.

We have been taught to believe that our colonial empire, “on which the sun never sets,” is about the most important element in our national greatness, and that these vast dominions in every part of the world add incalculably, though in some mysterious way, to our imperial dignity and strength. And such vague declamation as the following is given us in lieu of argument. “The extent and glory of an empire are solid advantages for all its inhabitants, and especially for those who inhabit its centre. Whatever the possession of our colonies may cost us in money, the possession is worth more in money than its money cost, and infinitely more in other respects. For, by overawing foreign nations and impressing mankind with a prestige of our

might, it enables us to keep the peace of the world, which we have no interest in disturbing, as it would enable us to disturb the world if we pleased. The advantage is, that the possession of this immense empire by England, causes the mere name of England to be a real and mighty power; the greatest power that now exists in the world. If we give up our colonies England would cease to be a power; and in order to preserve our independence we should have to spend more than we now do in the business of our defence."\* Mr. Cobden and his party argue on the other hand, and with much force, that this "prestige of empire" is a hollow show, which other nations as well as ourselves are beginning to see through; that outlying dependencies which require to be garrisoned in time of peace and protected in time of war, draft off from this country the forces which are needed for our defence at home; dissipate our army and navy in forty or fifty isolated and distant quarters; and waste the funds which should be devoted to the protection of the mother country. It is idle, they affirm, to pretend that a system which gives us such a vast additional territory to defend without giving us any additional means of defending it, can be other than a source of dangerous weakness; that if we had no dependencies, we should be impregnable and invulnerable at home; and that half our navy and a fourth of our army would suffice for the protection of our hearths and homes. If, indeed, the colonies paid tribute into our treasury, if they furnished contingents to our military force, and supplied a fixed quota of ships and stores toward the augmentation of our navy, —the case might be different. But they do nothing of all this: overtaxed and overburdened England pays for a great part of their civil government, and nearly the

\* Wakefield's Art of Colonisation. p. 98.



whole of their naval and military requirements: the impoverished and struggling peasant of Dorsetshire—the suffering artisan of Lancashire—the wretched needlewoman of London—all have to pay their contribution to the defence and the civil rule of the comfortable Australian farmer, the wealthy Canadian settler, and the luxurious Jamaica negro. If Sir W. Molesworth's statistics may be taken as approaching to accuracy, our colonial empire costs us at least 4,000,000*l.* a year—a sum nearly equal to the income-tax—to the malt-tax—to the sugar-tax;—any one of which might be repealed, to the infinite relief of our people, in case our colonies were abandoned.

Lastly, we govern them ill; and, governing them as we do from a distance, and having such an immense number and variety of them to govern, we cannot govern them otherwise than ill. They are perpetual sources of difficulty and dispute; they are always quarrelling with us, and complaining of us, and not unfrequently breaking out into open rebellion; they yearn for independence, and would gladly purchase immunity from our vexatious interference and ignorant control by encountering all the risks and difficulties to which a severance of the imperial connection might expose them. — Since, then, the colonies are commercially as free as America or Spain; since they are no longer favoured or enforced customers for our productions; since they would be at least as available to our emigrants if independent as if still subject to our rule; since they refuse to help us by relieving us of our convict population; since they are sources of weakness and not of strength to us in times of peril or of war; since they pay no part of the expenses of the mother country, and only a small portion of their own; since we mismanage their affairs and impede their progress; and since they themselves wish to be set free from a fettering and galling yoke;—

what argument, which will bear the test of close investigation, can be adduced to warrant our retaining them in tutelage ?

Such is — clearly, concisely, and, we believe, fairly stated — the reasoning we have to meet. Such are the conclusions, deduced to all appearance from the premises by the legitimate process of logic, against which we are to show cause. The position is undoubtedly a strong one ; nevertheless, we hold that there are sufficient grounds for maintaining inviolate the connection actually existing between the colonies and the mother country.

And, first, let us look a little more closely into the question of their actual cost. Sir W. Molesworth's estimate in his speech of July 1848, is as follows : — He finds the total colonial military expenditure for the year 1843–4 put down at 2,556,919*l.*, and assuming that it has not been much diminished since, he estimates it at 2,500,000*l.* per annum. He then, on the ground of the use made of our extensive colonial empire in all debates, as an argument against any reduction of our navy estimates, assumes that one-third of the ships on foreign stations, or forty-five vessels with 8000 men, may be debited to the colonies, as maintained simply on their account. The cost of these, added to direct rates in the navy estimates, he takes at 1,000,000*l.* The civil expenditure of Great Britain on account of the colonies he puts down at 300,000*l.*, and the extraordinary expenses at 200,000*l.*, a-year — making a total of 4,000,000*l.*, which he considers the colonies to cost the mother country in actual outlay.

Now, in this account, we have several things mixed up which have no very legitimate connection with one another. The military and maritime stations which are maintained in different quarters of the world as depôts for our forces, as harbours of refuge, as fortresses for the benefit of our troops in case of war, as positions ser-

viceable and necessary for our navy, or for the defence of our general commerce, are clearly not colonies, and ought not to be reckoned as such in the analysis of our expenditure. They are kept up, because we imagine them (whether rightly or foolishly is nothing to the present purpose) important to our imperial strength and safety as a great maritime and commercial nation, and one of the principal Powers of Europe. We may be wrong in keeping Gibraltar and Malta; but in a discussion as to the cost of our colonies, any allusion to them is obviously out of place. Then our penal settlements — in as far as they are penal settlements — must not be confounded with colonies: the sums which we expend there for the maintenance and safe custody of our convicts, form no part of the cost of our colonies. The Parliamentary Papers very properly class our dependencies under three distinct heads — Plantations and Colonies, properly so called, such as Canada, West and South Australia, and the West Indies; Maritime and Military Stations, as Malta, Gibraltar, the Ionian Islands, &c.; and Penal Settlements, as Sydney, Van Diemen's Land, and Bermuda. This last place, however, being partly kept up for military and naval purposes, is classed in the second division, as is also Mauritius, though a productive colony, because in the late war it was found absolutely essential to possess it as a means of protecting our commerce in those seas (prizes to the amount of seven millions having been carried in thither before we seized it), and because it has been deemed necessary to incur considerable expense in repairing and completing its fortifications. Now let us separate the sum, which Sir W. Molesworth lumps under one head, into its proper divisions. The total cost in 1843-4, charged upon the military purse of Great Britain, was (throwing out 48,941*l.* of "general charges," which we cannot well appropriate) 2,509,026*l.* thus: —

Military and maritime stations	-	-	£952,934
Penal settlements	-	-	189,005
Plantations and colonies proper	-	-	1,367,087
			<hr/>
			£2,509,026

The military expenditure for our *colonies-proper*, then, instead of being, as Sir W. Molesworth stated, above two millions and a half, was little more than *one million and a quarter*. But even this sum has since been reduced,—how much we cannot precisely say; but we find by a Parliamentary Paper bearing date April 27. 1849, that the average annual cost for pay and commissariat expenses charged to Great Britain on account of our different dependencies, for the five years ending 1847, stood thus :—

Military and maritime stations	-	-	£831,193
Penal settlements	-	-	134,769
Plantations and colonies proper	-	-	982,508
			<hr/>
			£1,948,470

The just proportion of our naval expenditure, which should be charged to colonial account, it is impossible to estimate with any precision; because, though we know the number of vessels attendant on our purely military and maritime stations, it is impossible to say what proportion of the force employed on foreign service is required for the protection of our commerce, and what for the defence and supervision of our colonies. With our ships spread over the whole world, even to the remotest corners, with our merchants settled in all parts constantly claiming the interference and protection of government, and prompt and vehement in their complaints whenever their representations do not meet with instant attention, a numerous and widely-scattered naval force would still be required, even if our colonies were independent, or abandoned to other alliances. Sir

W. Molesworth's estimate — forty-five ships and 8000 men as fairly chargeable to the colonial service — is only a guess, and we can do little more than oppose to it another guess made by Mr. Danson after a careful examination of the reasons adduced by the Committee on Navy Estimates, which sat in 1848, for the naval force employed on each station. Mr. Danson's conclusion is that only fifteen ships and 3200 men properly belong to colonial account. This would reduce the expenditure more than one-half. We are, however, enabled to present our readers with a return which will give us at least some ground for forming an approximate judgment of the force employed on colonial service, properly so called, as compared with that required for political objects, or for the protection of our general commerce. The pendants flying on foreign stations were in 1850 (exclusive of nine on the packet service) 121 in number, and were thus distributed:—

Colonial quarters of the world:—

East India, China, and Australia	-	-	19
Cape of Good Hope	-	-	8
N. American and West Indies	-	-	13
			—40

Non-colonial quarters:—

Mediterranean	-	-	-	20
Coast of Africa	-	-	-	31
West Coast of America	-	-	-	11
S. E. coast of America	-	-	-	12
Western squadron, Tagus, &c.	-	-	-	7
				—81
				<hr/> 121 <hr/>

Now, the Cape of Good Hope is generally regarded as much more a military station than a colony proper, and is classed under the former head in the public accounts. Moreover, the vessels reported as on this station include

those of Mauritius, and also those employed in the suppression of the slave trade on the eastern coast ; so that not more than four vessels with 800 men can be fairly allowed for the colonial demand. So vast a portion of our trade is carried on with China and the East Indies and Australasia\*, that, under any circumstances, a large force would be required in those seas, to ensure the safety of our merchant ships, especially as piracy, to a formidable extent, still prevails in the Indian Archipelago. Four of the vessels reported on this station are detached for the use of Australia and New Zealand ; and the unsettled state of our relations with China have rendered necessary a great addition to our naval force. Of the nineteen vessels it is very doubtful whether more than six are devoted to strictly colonial service. Our trade to North America and the West Indies, in which quarter thirteen vessels are stationed, amounted, in 1849, to more than one-fourth of our whole foreign commerce, and would still, if our colonial empire were abandoned, require the presence of a considerable force, probably half that at present maintained. From this summary it would appear that from sixteen to eighteen vessels with about 3600 to 4000 men, may fairly be charged to colonial account (in addition to a sum varying from 74,000*l.* in 1843-4, to 82,400*l.* in 1846-7, which appears in our naval estimates for expenditure on shore), in place of the forty-five vessels and 8000 men debited to it by Sir W. Molesworth.

A sum of 200,000*l.* is put down by him for "extraordinary expenses," an item we are not prepared to dispute ; but when he states our civil expenditure on account of the colonies at 300,000*l.* per annum, he is again in error. The total cost to Great Britain of the civil government of *all* her dependencies, had reached

\* In 1849, 11,000,000*l.*, out of a total of 59,000,000*l.* of exports.



its maximum in late years in 1846-7, when it was 492,192*l.*, since which time it has been greatly reduced. In 1850, it was estimated at 441,527*l.* But when we come to analyse this amount, we find it thus apportioned:—

Military and maritime stations	-	-	£92,780
Penal settlements	-	-	259,804
Plantations and colonies proper	-	-	139,608
			<hr/>
			£492,292
			<hr/>

In 1850, the sum chargeable to actual colonies was about 136,000*l.*

We will now bring into one single glance the various items of the actual cost of our colonies, properly so called, compared with the rough estimate of Sir W. Molesworth.

	Sir W. M.'s Estimate.	Actual Cost.
Military expenditure	- £2,500,000	£1,367,087
Naval „	- 1,000,000	500,000
Civil government	- 300,000	136,000
Extraordinary expenses	- 200,000	200,000
		<hr/>
		£2,203,087
		<hr/>

The cost, fairly calculated, to Great Britain of her colonial empire, is, then, somewhat more than two millions yearly. There was a time, unquestionably, when it was far greater. In the old days of protection the arguments of those, who are for abandoning our colonies on the score of their costliness, might have been based upon far stronger and more startling facts. At a time when the protective duties on the produce of our sugar colonies alone were calculated to cost us 5,000,000*l.* a year, and those on Canadian timber at least 1,000,000*l.* more, it would have been difficult to maintain that these dependencies did not cost us more

than they were worth, and more than we could easily or wisely pay. But now, when all these objectionable discriminating duties have been abandoned in principle, and when the few remains of them are in rapid process of extinction ; when the burden of our colonial empire is reduced to the simple pecuniary outlay of two millions annually ; and when the East Indies, the most valuable portion of it in a commercial point of view, not only costs us nothing at all, but actually pays 60,000*l.* annually into our military chest, towards defraying the expense of a larger reserve force than might otherwise be necessary ; the time does seem singularly ill chosen for proposing to abandon this empire, on the plea of our inability any longer to endure the burdensome expense. We must, however, do Sir W. Molesworth the justice to admit that this suggestion of abandonment does not proceed from him. His proposal is limited to a reduction of imperial expenditure, on account of the colonies, to a sum of two millions—more, as we have shown, than it actually amounts to : and towards the attainment of this object he makes several useful suggestions, which have received the attention they deserve, and some of which have been partially followed out.

Since, then, there is no foundation for the idea that we need to abandon our colonies from sheer inability to retain them, we may proceed to point out a few of the reasons which may be urged for preserving the connection inviolate, and which we think will be deemed conclusive by the nation at large, if not by all political parties in it.

In the first place, not a single one of our colonies is inhabited by a homogeneous population. In none, is the British race the sole one ; in scarcely any, is it the most numerous. Some of the dependencies have been taken from savage tribes ; others have been conquered

from other European nations. In Trinidad we have *seven* distinct races; in the Cape colony at least *five*; in Canada *four*; in Mauritius *four*; in Ceylon at least *three*; in Australia and New Zealand *two*. The Australian colonies are the only ones which, from the unimportance of the native savages, we can venture to consider as peopled by a purely British race. In Lower Canada, the French form *five-sevenths* of the population; and taking the whole of our North American provinces together, more than one-fourth of the inhabitants are of French origin or descent. In the West Indian group the whites are only *one in fifteen* of the whole; the remainder are, mainly, recently emancipated slaves, still retaining (as the late visitation of cholera brought painfully into view) much of the ignorance of their African origin, and many of the feelings of their servile condition. The population of the Cape, in 1847, is stated at 170,000, of whom 72,000 were whites, and of these 52,000 were Dutch; the rest were Caffres, Hottentots, and Negroes. The population of Mauritius was, in 1845, 180,000, of which number (though we have no certain record later than 1827), probably not more than 10,000 at the outside were whites, the remainder being Coolies and Negroes. In Ceylon the estimate for 1847, gave 1,500,000 as the number of the native or immigrant coloured races, chiefly Cingalese, and 5572 as the number of the whites, some of these being Portuguese, and many being Dutch, from whom we took the island. In New Zealand, the natives, a hardy, intelligent, and noble race, amount, it is calculated, to 120,000, and the inhabitants of European descent to not more than 18,000, at the latest dates.

Now, with what show of decency or justice could England abandon to their own guidance and protection countries peopled by such various, heterogeneous, and often hostile races,—even if any considerable number

of their inhabitants were unwise enough to wish it? What inevitable injustice such a step must entail upon one or other section of the colonists, what certain peril to the interests of them all, and of humanity at large! Let us follow out this inquiry in the case of two or three of them. We will assume that Canada would go on without any serious disturbances, now that the various populations which inhabit it have been so much more amalgamated than before by being pressed together into one legislature. We will suppose that the Australian colonies would be able to stand on their own feet, and to maintain their own interests, and would manifest that marvellous faculty for self-government and social organisation which has always been the proud distinction of the Anglo-Saxon race. We will concede that the settlers in New Zealand would succeed in civilising the wild tribes around them, and would make them friendly fellow-citizens, and useful subjects and auxiliaries; though we should not be without some apprehension as to the result, since with a warlike, shrewd, and energetic people seven to one is fearful odds. But what would be the result in Jamaica, in Mauritius, at the Cape, and in Ceylon, where the blacks outnumber the whites in overwhelming proportion, and where the whites themselves belong to disunited and hostile nations? In Jamaica, and our other West Indian possessions, one of three results would follow,—either the whites would remain as now, the dominant class, and would use their legislative power for the promotion of their own interests, and for the compression of the subject race;—would induce large immigration, would prohibit squatting, would compel work; would tax the necessities of life rather than their own property or their own commerce,—perhaps might even strive to restore a modified slavery: or, the blacks, easily excited, but not easily restrained when once aroused by

their demagogues and missionaries, would seize upon the supreme power, either by sudden insurrection, or by gradual and constitutional, but not open force ; and in this event few who know the negroes well, who have watched them during the prevalence of cholera in Jamaica, or who have the example of Haiti before their eyes, will doubt that another Haiti would ere long, though not perhaps at once, be the issue of the experiment : or, lastly, the whites, fearing the second alternative, and finding themselves too feeble to enforce the first, would throw themselves into the arms of the United States, who would, as we are well aware, receive them with a warm welcome and a covetous embrace, and would speedily reconvert 800,000 freemen into slaves. This we think far the most probable alternative of the three. But is there one of the three which any philanthropist, any Briton, any friend to progress and civilisation, could contemplate without grief and dismay ? Or is there any fourth issue of the abandonment of these colonies which bears even the shadow of likelihood about it ? Whether the Negroes subdued the whites, and established a black paradise of their own, or the whites, with the help of the Americans, reduced the Negroes to slavery, the result would be almost equally deplorable. All the hopes which England has nourished of civilising and redeeming the African race must be abandoned, and all the sacrifices she has made so ungrudgingly for this high purpose will have been thrown away. But, apart from this consideration, we have simply *no right* to abandon the blacks to the possible oppression of the whites, nor the whites to the dubious mercies of the blacks. We cannot do so without a dereliction of duty, amounting to a crime. Towards both races we have incurred the solemn obligations of protection and control ; both have acted or suffered under a tacit covenant, which it would be flagrant dis-

honesty to violate; towards both we have assumed a position which we may not without dishonour abdicate, on the miserable plea that it would be convenient and economical to do so.

In the case of the Cape, where the Dutch outnumber the English colonists in the proportion of *five to two*, and where the coloured races are more numerous than both put together, even if we take no account of the subject tribes recently added to our sway, what would be the result of a separation from Great Britain?— Either the resumption of her old dominion by Holland, or a struggle for superiority between the two white nations (the Hottentots in the meantime looking on with amazement and contempt); which, however it might end, would be disgraceful and disastrous, and which, if numbers afford any ground for predicting the result, might probably terminate to the advantage of the Dutch. And no one who has read the early history of that settlement, and the barbarous and habitually oppressive treatment of the natives by that people, would not regard such a catastrophe as a step backwards in civilisation, and an event to be deprecated and averted by every means in our power. An abandonment of this colony by England would be at once a shameful breach of faith to those of our citizens who have gone thither on the strength of the imperial connection, and to those native tribes whom we have rescued from the brutality of their former masters. In Ceylon, — where a small nucleus of five thousand Europeans are surrounded by a hostile population of fifteen hundred thousand Orientals, and where a formidable and sanguinary insurrection, only just quelled, has given us an intimation of what may be expected from such a people when worked upon by native priests and foreign demagogues, our responsibilities are equally serious. A desertion of our post as masters must be accompanied



by an ample and costly indemnity to those European settlers, whose position, through such a step, would be no longer tenable or safe, and most probably by the loss of the whole or the greater part of a commerce which has now reached an annual amount of one million and a quarter. Instead of abandoning it, Sir W. Molesworth proposes to hand it over to the East India Company.

Colonies with mixed and aboriginal populations such as these, then, we simply *could not* abandon; colonies, with a population exclusively or overpoweringly British, come under a different category. But even with these, we think it is not difficult to see that the interests of civilisation will be far more effectually served by their retention than by their abandonment,—by still maintaining them as integral portions of the British empire,—than by casting them adrift to run the chances of a hazardous voyage unassisted and alone. They would “go ahead” far faster, we are told, if independent, than if still subject to the hampering rule of the mother country; and the example of the United States is triumphantly appealed to in confirmation of the assertion. We reply, that we can well believe that they would go ahead far faster if free than if fettered, but not than they will now, when colonial legislatures have been created and endowed with the powers of managing all strictly colonial concerns. There is scarcely an advantage conferable by freedom, possessed by the United States since their separation from Britain, that will not now be enjoyed in an equal degree by our North American and our Australian dependencies. Moreover, there are figures on record which appear to show that, vast as has been the progress of the United States, it has been not only equalled but surpassed by the strides forward of our principal colonies in recent years. Between 1790 and 1850 the population of the United

States multiplied from four millions to twenty-four, or an increase of 500 per cent. That of Lower Canada multiplied between 1784 and 1848 from 113,000 to 770,000, or 600 per cent.; and that of Upper Canada, between 1811 and 1848, from 77,000 to 723,000, or 840 per cent. Between 1830 and 1850, the United States' population increased from 12,866,000 to 23,674,000, or not quite 83 per cent.; that of the two Canadas, between 1831 and 1848, from 746,600 to 1,493,290, or more than 100 per cent.; while the population of the Australian group sprang up from 51,910, in 1826, to 350,000, in 1848, showing an increase of nearly 600 per cent. in twenty-two years. In commerce also the comparison is very favourable. While the commerce of North American and Australian colonies (imports and exports) increased in seventeen years, between 1829 and 1846\*, from 8,150,000*l.* to 14,900,000*l.* yearly, or more than 80 per cent., that of the United States had increased in the same period from \$146,000,000 to \$235,000,000, or 60 per cent.

If, indeed, it were true, as is often ignorantly alleged, that the colonies hated Great Britain, and were anxious to cast off their allegiance to her, much might be urged against the policy of retaining unwilling and therefore troublesome and dangerous dependencies. But, we believe the statement to be the reverse of true. They may hate the Colonial Office: they do not hate England. They are often indignant, and sometimes we think they have been so with justice, at the vexatious interference, the injudicious control, the irritating vacillations, the sad mistakes of the authorities at home; they often bluster and sometimes rebel; they nurture in their bosom, as does every community, a noisy knot of turbulent and disaffected men; they talk largely at times

\* We have not been able to procure complete returns for any earlier or later years.

of their desire of independence, and occasionally even forget themselves so far as to hint at "annexation." But this is the mere effervescence of political excitement. Let us hear the testimony of one who knows the colonies well, whose name is peculiarly associated with them, and whose vehement hostility to the Colonial Office renders his statement on this point of singular value.

"The *peculiarity* of colonies," he says, "is their attachment to the mother country. Without having lived in a colony — or at any rate, without having a really intimate acquaintance with colonies, which only a very few people in the mother country have or can have — it is difficult to conceive the intensity of colonial loyalty to the empire. In the colonies of England, at any rate, the feeling of love towards England, and of pride in belonging to her empire, is more than a sentiment; it is a sort of passion which all the colonists feel, except the Milesian-Irish emigrants. I have often been unable to help smiling at the exhibition of it. In what it originates I cannot say, perhaps in a sympathy of blood or race; for the present Anglo-Americans (not counting those Milesian-Americans who pass for belonging to the Anglo-Saxon race) feel in their hearts' core the same kind of love and respect for England, that we Englishmen at home feel for the memory of Alfred or Elizabeth: but, whatever may be its cause, I have no doubt that love of England is the ruling sentiment of English colonies. Not colonists, let me beg you to observe, but colonial communities; for, unfortunately, the ruling passion of individuals in our colonies is the love of getting money. How strong the collective love of England is, how incapable of being ever much diminished by treatment at the hands of England, which is calculated to turn love into hatred, you will be better able to judge when I shall come to our system of colonial government. Here I must beg of you to take my representation in a great measure upon trust. If it is correct, the fact shows that the possession of dependencies which are also colonies, conduces to the might, security, and peace of the empire; not merely by the prestige of greatness, as other dependencies do, but also by the national par-

tianship for England, of the communities which she plants. To her own strength there is added that of a large family of devoted children." \*

We entirely concur in this representation. So strong do we believe this sentiment of pride and attachment to be, and so warmly do we think it is reciprocated by the mother country, that if, in an evil hour, the counsels of the counterfeit economists were to prevail, and England were to resign her children to the vanity and feebleness of independence, we feel certain that the very first peril they encountered from without, the very first time they were menaced either with insult or with conquest by a foreign power, they would instinctively and undoubtedly appeal to England for assistance and protection; and England would respond to their confidence with the most prompt and generous aid. It is idle to imagine that Great Britain would stand tamely by to witness the oppression or danger of any of her children, or that politicians who should coldly advise such conduct, would not thereby condemn themselves to future powerlessness and obscurity. The spirit of the nation would ensure her being dragged in as principal into any serious quarrel in which any of her former dependencies might be involved. We should have to bear the expense of defending them from attack, without having any control over their conduct in incurring it.

Finally: there is one other consequence which would ensue from the abandonment of our colonial empire which demands to be most deliberately weighed,—and by none more deliberately than by that section of the free traders who are foremost in recommending so entire a reversal of our old national policy. If we emancipate our colonies, and cast them on their own unaided resources both for self-government and self-

\* Wakefield's Art of Colonisation, p. 100.

defence, they will of course immediately look about them for the means of securing these primary objects. However economically they may manage—however small the salary they may assign their governors—however homely and republican the style of life they may require their officials to adopt—they can neither govern themselves, nor defend themselves, without a considerable revenue. An appeal to the example of the United States has no validity as a reply. The United States are surrounded by no ambitious neighbours; they are liable to no attack from without; they have no wars or quarrels to fear but such as they pertinaciously insist upon bringing upon themselves. They are an aggressive, not a defensive people. In spite of these advantages, we know too that their revenue is large. What their actual expenditure for civil and military purposes actually is we do not know, and shall perhaps never clearly ascertain; inasmuch as before we can come to any conclusion on the matter we must be able to add the expenditure of each State of the Union to that of the Federal Government, which alone is published to the world. Nay, further, we must be able to add the cost of their militia and volunteer forces to the cost of their standing army. Now though we cannot authenticate with any precision all the facts we need, we are not without some disclosures from which much instruction and some startling inferences may be safely drawn. The organised and enrolled militia of the States amounts to the immense force of 2,008,068 men, who cannot be clothed, armed, trained and drilled, it has been estimated, at a less cost, either to the State or to themselves, than \$7,500,000 a year. Then we learn from the last report of the American Secretary to the Treasury that the annual aggregate *federal* expenditure alone reached \$21,278,000 before the Mexican war, \$41,734,000 while that war lasted, and \$38,974,000

on the average of three years since its termination. If we compare this last figure of 8,000,000*l.* with our British budget of 20,000,000*l.* for the same purposes, and reflect that ours includes the demands of a vast colonial empire, and that theirs *does not* include the outlay of each separate State for State purposes; that their population is short of 24,000,000, and that ours (exclusive of India, which costs us nothing) is 32,000,000;—we shall not be disposed to imagine that even a cheaply managed republic like America can dispense with a large revenue, nor that any of our emancipated colonies—whose very defencelessness would tempt the covetousness and ambition of the whole world—could be more successful in solving such a problem. *How then must their revenue be raised?*

There are three sources from the combination of which it might be derived: the sale of waste lands, direct taxation, or customs duties on imported articles. The first of these sources could never produce much; for, in order to attract settlers or purchasers, the price must not materially vary from that current for land of equal quality elsewhere. The price in the United States is a dollar and a quarter an acre; a price even twice as high would go but a very small way in raising a colonial revenue. Direct taxation is always burdensome, irritating, and unwelcome,—the ready and common resort of despotic governments, but invariably avoided, as far as possible, by republican ones,—eschewed by every country generally in proportion to the influence which the people exercise on their financial ministers. In colonies where the population is scanty and scattered, there would arise peculiar and insuperable obstacles in the way of levying a capitation-tax, a land-tax, or an income-tax,—obstacles which will suggest themselves at once to every mind. The source of indirect taxation alone remains; and from this ac-



cordingly we should find that the revenue of the emancipated colonies would inevitably be raised. A further option has to be made in the choice between import and export duties ; when the former, among a commercially educated people, will obviously be the most popular, and will certainly be adopted.

Now, in a densely populated and luxurious country like England, moderate duties suffice to procure a large revenue ; and, as a matter of experience, moderate duties are commonly found more productive than high ones, because among thirty millions of people an increase of consumption speedily makes up for a reduction in the rate of charge. But this could not be the case in a thinly peopled colony ; a low scale of duties could never raise an ample or adequate revenue ; the money must be obtained, and objectionable and burdensome as such a way of obtaining it would be, and would be acknowledged to be, still, as it would be *less* burdensome, less irritating, and more practicable, than any other, it would be adopted as a matter of course. The first effect, then, of our proclaiming the independence of our colonies must inevitably be, the enactment by them of a *high tariff on all imported commodities* ; and as the commodities required by new countries are, by the nature of the case, articles of manufactured rather than of agricultural produce, and as England is the chief manufacturing country in the world, it would be chiefly on our productions that this high tariff would press, however unintentional such a result might be, and however, in diplomatic language, it might be "regretted and deplored."

The rate of the duties imposed by such a tariff it is in vain to guess ; this must depend primarily on the necessities of the State imposing it. If, however, the example of the United States is of any service in helping us to a conjecture, it may be observed that her

tariff imposes duties of from 30 to 50 per cent. on all our chief productions, and that a powerful section of her people are clamorous for an augmentation of these rates. We have no reason to suppose that a lower scale would meet the requirements of Canada, Australia, or the Cape. Now, a high tariff is necessarily, *ipso facto*, and without any malicious intention, a *protective* one. Each of our colonies contains a number of artisans, conversant with all the processes of English manufacture, trained in English factories, familiar with the use and construction of English machinery; most of our colonies are rich in raw materials: and it is idle to suppose that a protection of 30 or 50 per cent. will not suggest to the unsleeping enterprise and energy of some of our colonial brethren the idea of manufacturing for themselves the wool or the cotton which they produce, and clothing themselves as well as feeding themselves at home. To many of those expatriated artisans a manufacturing occupation cannot but prove far more congenial than fighting through the difficulties of the untamed wilderness; and an industrial interest is thus certain of springing up,—the result of protection, and requiring, therefore, the continuance of a protective policy in future. Even now there are symptoms how easily such an interest might be excited into being, even in our most purely agricultural dependencies. It is only a few months since a friend of ours returned from New South Wales clad in woollen pantaloons, grown, spun, woven, and dyed in the colony, of most excellent quality, and furnished to him cheaper than any English tailor would have supplied them.

Now, if Mr. Cobden, after having spent the last ten years of his energetic and useful life in abolishing protective tariffs at home, should wish to spend the next ten years in establishing them in every other corner of the world, and in laying the foundation of a reactionary,

policy which shall close the markets we ourselves have planted in the wilderness, one after another, to the produce of our spindles and our looms, — we cannot hinder him ; — but we should wish him to do it with his eyes open.

We hope we have succeeded in making it clear that our colonies are far too valuable portions of our empire to be lightly laid down or put away ; and that if they should not continue to be so, the fault will lie in some sad mismanagement of our own. Many of them, in simple justice to the native population, or to those British subjects who have settled there on the faith of the imperial connection, we *could not* possibly abandon. Others the interests of civilisation and humanity compel us to retain. All of them ought to be, and will be if we govern them aright, sources of strength and pride to us. The very interests of that free and enlightened commercial policy for which we have fought so long and sacrificed so much, forbid us to entertain the thought of severing the time-hallowed connection between Great Britain and the communities which have gone forth from her bosom. Nor is there any call or motive for such a step ; the cost of our colonies, though less by one-half than it has been represented, we could easily sustain were it twice as great : the affection of the colonists it is easy to preserve, or to recover where, through misjudgment or misunderstanding, it has been shaken or impaired. By ruling them with forbearance, steadiness, and justice ; by leading them forward in the path of freedom with an encouraging but cautious hand ; by bestowing on them the fullest powers of self-government wherever the infusion of British blood is large enough to warrant such a course ; in a word, by following out the line of policy announced and defended by Lord John Russell in his speech on the introduction

of the bill for the government of the Australian colonies in February of last year, — we may secure the existence and rivet the cohesion of a vast dominion blest with the wisest, soberest, most beneficial form of liberty which the world has yet enjoyed, and spreading to distant lands and future ages the highest, most prolific, most expansive development of civilisation which Providence has ever granted to humanity. To abandon these great hopes, — to cast our colonial empire to the winds, with the sole aim of saving two millions a year, — is a line of policy which, we sincerely think, is worthy only of a narrow and a niggard school ; which will be counselled only by men who are merchants rather than statesmen, and whose mercantile wisdom even is confined, short-sighted, and unenlightened ; one, which, we feel assured, can never be adopted by England till the national spirit which has made her what she is, shall have begun to wane and fade away.

# THE RELATION BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED.\*

It is a glorious achievement, and a rich reward for long years of toil and thought—for the worldly sacrifices which a studious life imposes, and the weariness of brain which it entails—to have reached a standing point of mental height and distance from which history can be seen as a connected whole; from which the long perspective of ages, so confused and perplexing when viewed from within, from below, or in detail, presents itself to the mind of the observer as a continuous stream, meandering constantly indeed, and flowing with varying swiftness and directness, but ever, amid all its wanderings, approaching nearer and nearer to its ocean-goal. Gazing from this focal elevation at that vast aggregate of facts, now glorious, now gloomy, which make up the sad story of humanity, it is sometimes given to us dimly to discern the meaning and the mystery which pervades its course, and to catch glimpses of that luminous thread of purpose which permeates and irradiates the whole; which, often clouded, often disappearing, is yet never lost; and which, wherever discoverable, illuminates both past and future with a revealing splendour.

“ The poet in his vigil hears  
Time flowing through the night—  
A mighty stream, absorbing tears,  
And bearing down delight :

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\* From the “ Westminster Review.”

1. *The Claims of Labour*. London : 1844.

2. *Responsibilities of Employers*. London : 1849.

There, resting on his bank of thought,  
He listens, till his soul  
The voices of the waves has caught—  
The meaning of their roll.”

At first little is discernible but wars and conquests—savage conflicts of savage men—the display of restless, objectless, untameable energy—barbaric virtues shining through the darkness of barbaric crime. But soon states and empires are seen to emerge from the chaos of conflict and of passion; the spirit of God moves over the face of the waters; and light and order begin to be. Then one element of human nature after another is developed in startling distinctness, but in dangerous singleness, predominance, or disproportion; one form of civilisation after another rises, culminates, and sparkles; but no one of them endures, for no one contains within it all the ingredients of permanence. Still, through all these partial, transient, and spasmodic evolutions, man's nature acquired expansion, vigour, and enlarged capacities; each faculty gained strength even by its preternatural and one-sided excitation; and the race made vast, though fitful, tentative, and staggering steps towards the distant goal. It marched, though in irregular fashion, along the path assigned to it. But in the ripeness and fulness of appointed time a new element was introduced, bearing the form and stigmatised with the name of barbarism, yet rich in the materials of a rougher and stronger civilisation; and from this—over-riding, yet amalgamating with and adopting, all that was vital, permanent, and noble in the Greek and Roman development, and fused and interpenetrated by those mightier influences emanating from Palestine—has issued the modern European—the product and embodiment of all the past efforts of humanity towards the fulfilment of its destiny and the attainment of its ideal—



“The heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of Time,”—

in whom we may hope to see the realisation of all that is possible to man, and the gradual and not wholly unconscious approach towards the accomplishment of that informing and pervading purpose which gives light and consistency and meaning to his history.

Of the three great battles appointed to humanity, we, in this land at least, have fought and gained two. We have wrestled with wild Nature, and have subdued her to our service and tamed her to our will. Over the powers and obstacles of the material world we have achieved victory after victory—each more wonderful than the preceding one; we have pushed our pioneers and founded our cities in the remotest recesses of primeval forests; we have planted our footsteps and fixed our flag in the barrenest as in the richest regions; the sea has become to us a bridge, and not a gulf—a highway, not a barrier; climate has scarcely been an obstacle; even the burning deserts of Africa and the wastes of Arctic and Antarctic snows have scarce repelled us; the most stupendous engineering difficulties suggest no question as to “*whether* they can be overcome;” but only “at what cost can they be overcome;” rapidity of communication and facility of intercourse have reached a point which it is not easy even for imagination to surpass; even pain has found a conqueror in science; and, on the whole, if physical life were all we had to look to, and physical enemies the only ones we had to strive with, it would be difficult to believe that the goal of human progress, and the boundary line of human capability, was not close at hand. The first great battle of civilisation has been fought and won in a manner and with an issue which history may well record with pride.

But there was another and a sterner struggle to be

gone through — another and a nobler victory to be won. Man had to be emancipated from a dwarfing and paralysing thralldom, and given back into his own possession. His limbs had to be unfettered, and his energies to be electrified by the healthy and bracing atmosphere of freedom. Liberty of action had to be won from the tyrant, and liberty of thought from the priest. To the conflict of man with nature, succeeded the harder and far sadder conflict of man with man. As the aim was nobler, so the struggle was longer, the progress slower, and the martyrs more numerous by far. Age after age the tide of war swayed to and fro, with varying fortunes and in changed localities, but with no cessation; as combatant after combatant fell, another stepped into the vacant rank; as one weapon was blunted or broken, another and another was discovered of better temper and of keener edge; unexpected aid came often from around, sometimes from above; as defeat and despair darkened the horizon in one quarter, hope dawned upon it from another; till, thanks to our forefathers, who were made of sterner stuff, cast in a more stalwart mould, and gifted with a singler eye, than we who had our birth amid milder antecedents — thanks to the goodly fellowship of our reformers, and the noble army of our martyrs — we have now no impediments to our future progress save such as our own imperfections may create for us — such as may be heaped upon our path by indistinctness of vision, infirmity of purpose, or a halting and enfeebled will.

But we have now to trim our lamp and gird on our armour for a final work, which cannot be put by, and which must not be negligently done. The last battle of civilisation is the severest — the last problem, the knottiest to solve. Out of all the multitudinous ingredients and influences of the past; out of the conquest of nature and the victory of freedom; out of the blinding

and intermixture of all previous forms of polity and modifications of humanity ; — has arisen a complex order of society, of which the disorders and anomalies are as complex as its own structure. We are now summoned to the combat, not with material difficulties, nor yet with oppressors nor with priests, but with an imperfect and diseased condition of that social world of which we form a part — with pains and evils appalling in their magnitude, baffling in their subtlety, perplexing in their complications, and demanding far more clear insight and unerring judgment than even purity of purpose or commanding energy of will. This conflict may be said to date from the first French revolution ; and it has been increasing in intensity ever since, till it has now reached to a vividness and solemnity of interest which surpasses and overshadows the attractions of all other topics. Socialism, Communism, St. Simonism, Fourierism, Chartism, are among the indications of its progress. Gradually it has drawn all classes and orders of men into its ranks. The student in his library, the statesman in his cabinet, the merchant at his desk, the artisan at his loom, the peasant at his plough, are all, in their several departments, working at the same problem, intent upon the same thought. It has enlisted and consecrated science ; it has merged or superseded ordinary politics, or has given them a holier purpose and a deeper meaning ; it pierces through every organ of the periodic press ; it colours all the lighter literature of the day, provides fiction with its richest characters and its most dramatic scenes, and breathes into poetry an earnestness and a dignity to which the last age was a stranger. The tales of rough passion or of tender sentiment which charmed the readers of Richardson and Fielding find few admirers now ; even the superb romances of Walter Scott — though “ an everlasting possession,” to our language

— have no longer the unrivalled popularity they once enjoyed; and a new class of novels, of which “*Oliver Twist*” and “*Mary Barton*” are the type, harmonise more closely with the taste and temper of the times. The rich conceits of Cowley, the stately elaboration of Gray, the sublime melancholy of Young, fall flat upon our excited minds; even the fine versification and solid thought of Pope can find few real votaries now; and the wild conceptions, unequalled melody, and splendid imagery, in which Lord Byron poured forth the turbid and passionate sensibilities of his soul, have no longer the magic power they once wielded over all hearts — for we, in our generation, are stirred in yet inner depths, inured to sterner sorrows, worn by more genuine emotions. The progressive transfer in the allegiance of the day from Southey, Scott, and Byron, to Shelley, Keats, and Tennyson, marks the growth of an earnest spirit of universal social sympathy which was never so aroused as now. The whole tone of society bears witness to the same change: social interests, the concerns of the whole community, bear away the palm from every other topic of thought or feeling; and even the conversation of polished circles is characterised by an unwonted gravity. The finest minds in every order of intelligence “are enlisted into this great strife, and led to meet this unknown enemy;” — men who might have carried off the prizes in oratory or in law, in the realms of imagination or of history, or of abstruser learning, are irresistibly attracted to aid in that great work which has been given us to do, and to contribute their exertions and their sagacity to the solution of those problems which this age *must* solve if it would live and prosper — which it can neither pass by on the other side, nor push off upon its successor.

Of these problems, the true and fit relation between employer and employed is one of the most pressing and

the most perplexing: to ascertain what it ought to be, and to make it what it should be, is one of the first tasks allotted to our epoch and our country; and our present purpose is to contribute a few suggestions towards clearing away that confusion which, in most minds, hangs around the subject, and hides its real root and kernel from our view.

Viewed from the lofty point of vision of which we spoke just now, one uniform, ceaseless, pervading tendency is discernible through modern history, as far, at least, as the Western world is concerned—the tendency towards the equalisation of social conditions. Amid all vicissitudes, and in despite of all reactions, the progress is obvious, and the goal constantly in view. A clue is thus obtained to the purposes of Providence—a light which at once irradiates both past and future, which marshals the lessons of experience, which guides our further speculations, and wonderfully clears up the path of practical duty. From the birth of the existing order of things, an irresistible current has set in, which bears on its bosom institutions and hierarchies, principalities and powers, towards the ocean wherein all will be merged and moulded into their destined forms. It is not towards this or that form of republicanism that we are tending—not towards these or those political institutions—not towards this or that special mode of social organisation: these are but the shell and husk of the interior reality;—it is towards an abolition of partial privileges; towards a paring down of inessential differences; towards an equality, not perhaps of wealth, or of mind, or of inherent power, but of social condition, and of individual rights and freedom. The times when men were separated by barriers of rank and circumstance which made them almost different beings, are withdrawn far into the past: the times when even those divisions which yet remain will dwindle and vanish away are

coming rapidly and visibly nearer. Everything tells on the march, or is pressed into the service, of this perpetual but silent social revolution; the efforts of those who have striven for it, the struggles of those who have opposed it; the vices of some, and the virtues of others; the energy of one generation, and the lassitude and supineness of another — have all been overruled to forward and to favour the supreme design. Of all political philosophers, no one has seen this so clearly, or described it so graphically, as M. de Tocqueville: it would be difficult to condense, and impossible to amend, his sketch.

“Let us recollect the situation of France seven hundred years ago, when the territory was divided among a small number of families, who were the owners of the soil and the rulers of the inhabitants; the right of governing descended with the family inheritance from generation to generation; force was the only means by which man could act on man; and landed property was the sole source of power.

“Soon, however, the political power of the clergy was founded, and began to exert itself; the clergy opened its ranks to all classes, to the poor and the rich, to the villein and the lord; equality penetrated into the Government through the Church; and the being who, as a serf, must have vegetated in perpetual bondage, took his place as a priest in the midst of nobles, and not unfrequently above the heads of kings.

“The different relations of men became more complicated and more numerous as society gradually became more stable and more civilised. Thence the want of civil laws was felt; and the order of legal functionaries soon rose from the obscurity of the tribunals and their dusty chambers, to appear at the court of the monarch, by the side of feudal barons in their ermine and their mail.

“Whilst the kings were ruining themselves by their great enterprises, and the nobles exhausting their resources by private wars, the lower orders were enriching themselves by commerce. The influence of money began to be perceptible in state affairs. The transactions of business opened a new road to power, and



the financier rose to a station of political influence in which he was at once flattered and despised.

“Gradually the spread of mental acquirements, and the increasing taste for literature and art, opened chances of success to talent; science became a means of government, intelligence led to social power, and the man of letters took a part in the affairs of the state.

“In the course of these seven hundred years, it sometimes happened that in order to resist the authority of the crown, or to diminish the power of their rivals, the nobles granted a certain share of political rights to the people; or, more frequently, the kings permitted the lower orders to enjoy a degree of power, with the intention of repressing the aristocracy. In France the kings have always been the most active and constant of levellers. When they were strong and ambitious, they spared no pains to raise the people to the level of the nobles; when they were temperate or weak, they allowed the people to raise themselves.

“As soon as land was held on any other than a feudal tenure, and personal property began in its turn to confer influence and power, every improvement which was introduced into commerce and manufactures was a fresh element in the equality of conditions. Henceforward every new discovery, every new want which it engendered, and every new desire which craved satisfaction, was a step towards the universal level. The taste for luxury, the love of war, the sway of fashion, the most superficial as well as the deepest passions of the human heart, co-operated to enrich the poor and to impoverish the rich.

“From the time when the exercise of the intellect became the source of strength and of wealth, it is impossible not to consider every addition to science, every fresh truth, and every new idea, as a germ of power placed within the reach of the people. Poetry, eloquence, and memory, the grace of wit, the glow of imagination, the depth of thought, and all the gifts which are bestowed by Providence with an equal hand, turned to the advantage of the democracy; and even when they were in the possession of its adversaries, they still served its cause by throwing into relief the natural greatness of man.

“In perusing the pages of our history, we shall scarcely meet with a single great event, in the lapse of seven hundred years,

which has not turned to the advantage of equality. The crusades and the wars of the English decimated the nobles and divided their possessions; the erection of communities introduced an element of democratic liberty into the bosom of feudal monarchy; the invention of fire-arms equalised the villein and the noble on the field of battle; printing opened the same resources to the minds of all classes; the post was organised so as to bring the same information to the poor man's cottage and the palace gate; and Protestantism proclaimed that all men are alike able to find the road to Heaven. The discovery of America offered a thousand new paths to fortune, and placed riches and power within the grasp of the adventurous and the obscure.

"Nor are these phenomena at all peculiar to France. Wherever we turn our eyes, we shall witness the same continual process throughout the whole of Christendom. The various occurrences of national existence have everywhere turned to the advantage of democracy; all men have aided it by their exertions: those who have intentionally laboured in its cause, and those who have served it unwittingly; those who have fought for it, and those who have declared against it,—have all been driven along in the same track, have all laboured to one end, have all been instruments in the hands of God.

"The gradual development of equality of conditions is therefore a providential fact, and possesses all the characteristics of a divine decree; it is universal, it is durable; it constantly eludes all human interference; and all events as well as all men contribute to its progress."

Now, in the course of these operations, and under the influence of this constant tendency, the relations of rich and poor, of capitalist and labourer, of employer and employed, have undergone great change; while the enormous development of manufacturing industry which recent times have witnessed has introduced into those relations additional and most important modifications. The result of these alterations and complications, combined with a want of due study and comprehension of their nature, and of a consequent acceptance of and adaptation to them, has been a state of things which is

universally but vaguely felt to be eminently unsatisfactory, while few see clearly what is in fault or who are in the wrong, — where the root of the evil lies, and in what direction a remedy is to be sought. We shall endeavour to do what in us lies towards dispelling these mists; — but first we must guard ourselves against being supposed to echo the prevailing cry that the actual relation between employer and employed in this country is as thoroughly and generally defective as it is said to be; or that, where it is unsatisfactory and blameable, the sin is all on the one side, and the suffering all on the other. It is unquestionably true that in the case of those engaged in shops, in domestic service, in agricultural labour, or in manufacturing processes, the relation between them and their employers is on the whole far from being such as justice or benevolence would wish to see it, and must hope to make it; — but it is equally true that every year sees fresh attention aroused and fresh steps taken towards the amendment of this relation. It is certain that day by day the evil seems to grow and press upon our pained and startled vision; but it is surely as certain that this is only because day by day we open our eyes wider to the gloomy fact: it is not the object that grows in magnitude, but our sight that grows in comprehending and penetrating power. It is true that among the employers of labour in all departments there are numbers who have never awakened to their duties, and numbers who habitually violate or neglect them; but it is no less true that there are others of a better class, daily increasing in note, in numbers, in publicity, who have a high standard and a bright ideal, and who faithfully, though it may be often failingly, endeavour to approximate to both — who see what ought to be done, and who show what may be done. In the multiplication and improvement of schools and reading-rooms — in the erection of

baths and wash-houses — in the shorter hours of labour — in the earlier closing of shops — in the more frequent payment of wages — in the increasing number of cases of masters who really fulfil all their relations with exemplary assiduity, and who have done so for years before their names and labours came to light,—we have cheering indications that the desired exertions are not as scanty nor the desired object as distant as it is usual carelessly to affirm. The state of things offers much to grieve over, and much to do ; but writers and declaimers paint it as more unchangingly dark and more wholly unrelieved than is consistent with the truth. Even authors like those of “The Claims of Labour,” and “The Responsibility of Employers,” while drawing a sad picture of duties universally neglected, and relations utterly poisoned and perverted, do much to neutralise their representations by the numerous delineations they are led to give of instances in which those duties are sedulously performed, and those relations beautiful and righteous—instances which appear, by contrast, to have opened their eyes to the prevalent deformity, and to have suggested most of the amendments which they advocate. It may be undeniable—we fear it is—that in many cases a bitter and a hostile feeling still subsists between those who should be bound together in affection as they are in interest ; but our conviction is that this is gradually giving way before better mutual acquaintance and a clearer mutual insight, and that, where yet mitigated or exacerbated, the sin lies at the door of those who, from passion, prejudice, or mean and selfish aims, are perpetually irritating the still sensitive but closing wound, by the cantharides of their malignant insinuations and their wild harangues.

Nor do we think those representations more correct which assume, or seem to assume, that the neglected duties are all on the part of the employer, and the dis-

regarded rights all on the side of the workman. From the former, indeed, in the ratio of his superior intelligence and more cultivated powers, we may fairly demand a wider comprehension and a stricter discharge of the obligations of his station; to the latter, in consideration of his ignorance and inculture, we may pardon much obliquity of vision and much misreading of his claims. Still it is undeniable that the workman has duties towards his employer, the neglect or languid and reluctant performance of which almost entails a corresponding dereliction on the other party; or at least surrounds his obligations with needless and artificial difficulties. Through obstinate wilfulness the operative often thwarts, through unwarrantable and ill-founded mistrust he often baffles, the most sincere and earnest efforts of his employer to serve him and to raise him; preferring the advice and guidance of men who have never shown sympathy for him save by loud professions and mercenary declamations, to accepting the leadership of those who, while refusing to flatter his passions, have laboured hard and sacrificed much to promote his interests.

Still we unreservedly admit that even after full justice has been rendered to all that has been done to realise a better ideal for the relation of master and men, and to all the difficulties that lie, or have been thrown, in the way of doing more, a vast field lies open to us, earnestly calling for culture; ideas have to be cleared, examples to be followed, plans to be digested, errors to be eliminated, and a sound systematic footing to be found on which the disorganised and unsatisfactory relation can be readjusted.

The clearing of our ideas is the first requisite. We must recognise the changes which the progress of time has introduced into the relation of employer and employed, and understand the position which it has now

assumed, or towards which it is rapidly and inevitably tending. It is not by ignoring the conception which lies at the bottom of the actual and modern form of that relation, still less by transplanting into it and endeavouring to engraft upon it the incongruous conceptions which belonged to its earlier modifications, that we can hope to arrive at the true solution of the problem. The first form of the connection between master and servant, or master and workman, was that of possession or absolutism on the one side, and slavery or serfdom on the other; the second was that of recognised inferiority and admitted vassalage, or the feudal relation; the third, which we are everywhere approaching, and have in some cases reached, is that of contract between two independent parties. The idea that lies at the bottom of these several states is distinct and definable: that neither party have fully mastered, or loyally, and without *arrière pensée*, accepted the distinction, does not affect the reality or correctness of it, though it is the source of many of our difficulties and of much of our dissatisfaction. We have arrived at or are fast setting towards the third stage of the relation, and have almost completely cast aside the habits and basis of the previous ones; but we have not uniformly perceived this, and do not always remember it; we import into the present relation rags and fragments of the past; we confound and intermix the rights and obligations of two wholly different conditions; we confuse the ideas which belong to the one with the recollections and associations which survive of the other; we put new wine into old bottles, and sew new pieces on the old garment; and then we feel wonder and disgust at the rents and explosions which ensue.

Each of these relations may have been fitting and necessary in its time. Nay, some remains of the circumstances which made it fitting may survive to



another age, so as to perplex both our perceptions and our conduct. There may be much in the relations which are gone by more soothing to our pride, more attractive to our fancy, more pleasing to our affections, possibly even more harmonising with our notions of what is just and desirable, than in the relation which has succeeded them. But it is idle to repine, and useless to hark back upon the past. The wheels of society, any more than those of nature, were not made to roll backwards. The change is come; it is come in the regular course of that progressive revolution which, as we have seen, bears upon it every stamp and signet-mark of a divine decree; and, like every other dispensation of Providence, it is not to be repelled or ignored, but to be recognised, accepted, and turned to good account.

In the earliest times, when differences of station were salient and strongly marked; when power and wisdom belonged so paramountly to the few, and ignorance and helpless incapacity were so undeniably characteristic of the many, that rulers and chiefs were looked upon less as superiors than as demi-gods; when absolute supremacy seemed to be needed over the mass of men, both to direct and to enforce the performance of their duties; and when this supremacy was assumed on the one side and admitted on the other as a matter beyond question or dispute, and having its origin in the "fitness of things;" when kings had the power of life and death over their subjects, and parents over their children;—in those days the relation between employer and employed was naturally simple in the extreme: it was that of master and slave; the subjection was complete, and the authority was absolute. If the servant or workman were not his master's *property*, at least he had no separate existence or independent will; he lived and acted only by order; his master told him what to

do, showed him how to do it, compelled him to do it, and in one way or other fed, clothed, and housed him while doing it. Out of this simple relation sprang certain reciprocal claims and obligations: the slave owed his master faithful service and unreserved obedience; the master owed his slave guidance and control, protection from danger, maintenance through life, aid in sickness, a provision for old age. The relation had its beauties and its suitabilities; it was adapted to an age when intelligence was only partially developed, when social rights were imperfectly understood, when the dignity and capability of man as man was as yet an unborn exception, and when the doctrine of human equality had not dawned upon the world. If the duties springing out of the relation were on both sides faithfully performed, there was nothing in it necessarily degrading to the one party, or corrupting to the other; for, as M. de Tocqueville observes, "men are not corrupted by the exercise of power, or debased by the habit of obedience, but by the exercise of a power which they know to be illegal, and by obedience to a rule which they consider to be usurped and oppressive."

But this could not be the case now; new notions have sprung up in the minds of the lower orders as to their inherent claim to liberty; new ideas have germinated in the minds of the ruling classes as to the intrinsic impropriety of absolute dominion. A renewal of the servile relation is not only impossible, but would be criminal, because to both parties it would involve a violation of their new-born sentiments of justice. It is true that many of the grounds which justified and originated this relation in former ages exist here and there still, even among ourselves; it is true that cases may be pointed out, where the gulf between the two ranks seems to be as wide and deep as

it ever was ; where the labourers seem so helpless, stupid, impracticable, and perverse, that they need to be driven to their duties and coerced to their good ; where the compulsions of nature seem inadequate, and the intimations of instinct appear to be unheeded ; and where a strong case can be made out for a forcible recurrence to a state of pupilage. But it cannot be : the grown-up man may be as silly, as wilful, as infirm of purpose, as the child ; yet, though in the eye of reason he may need the same treatment, he cannot be replaced under the old subjection. We may regret that this should be forbidden, but we cannot deny that it is forbidden, by the altered spirit of the age.

In this, it will be seen, we are at issue with the most brilliant and influential writer of the day. Mr. Carlyle, who has a gigantic faculty for seizing hold of a great truth, and dressing it up in such wild exaggerations that it looks like falsehood, conceives that, in the case of the Irish at least, and many of our English poor, the one thing needful is the organisation of regiments and captains of industry, on a footing of the most unbounded and relentless despotism ; which regiments, or the raw materials of such he thus addresses : —

“ Vagrant Lackalls ! foolish most of you, criminal many of you, miserable all ; the sight of you fills me with astonishment and despair. What to do with you I know not ; long have I been meditating, and it is hard to tell. . . . Vagrant Lackalls, I at last perceive all this that has been sung and spoken for a long while about enfranchisement, emancipation, freedom, suffrage, civil and religious liberty over the world, is little other than sad temporary jargon, brought upon us by a stern necessity, but now ordered by a sterner to take itself away. Sad temporary jargon, I say ; made up of sense and nonsense,—sense in small quantities, and nonsense in very large ; and if taken for the whole or permanent truth of human things, it is not better than fatal infinite nonsense, eternally *untrue*. . . . As for you, my indigent, incompetent friends, I have

to repeat with sorrow, but with perfect clearness, what is plainly undeniable, and is even clamorous to get itself admitted, that you are of the nature of *slaves*. . . . Emancipation! Foolish souls, I say the whole world cannot emancipate you. Fealty to ignorant unruliness, to gluttonous sluggish improvidence, to the beer-pot and the devil, who is there that can emancipate a man in that predicament? Not a whole Reform Bill, a whole French revolution executed for his behoof alone; nothing but God the Maker can emancipate him by making him anew.

“To forward which glorious consummation, will it not be well, O indigent friends, that you, fallen flat there, shall henceforth learn to take advice of others as to the methods of standing? Plainly I let you know, and all the world and worlds know, that I, for my part, mean it so. Not as glorious unfortunate sons of freedom, but as recognised captives, as unfortunate fallen brothers requiring that I should command, and, if need were, control and compel you, can there henceforth be a relation between us? . . . . Arise, enlist in my Irish, my Scotch and English regiments of the new æra! Enlist there, ye poor wandering banditti; obey, work, suffer, abstain, as all of us have had to do; so shall you be useful in God’s creation, so shall you be helped to gain a manful living for yourselves; not otherwise than so. . . . Here is work for you; refuse to strike into it; shirk the heavy labour, disobey the rules;—I will admonish you and endeavour to incite you; if in vain, I will flog you; if still in vain, I will at last shoot you,—and make God’s earth, and the forlorn hope in God’s battle, free of you! Understand it, I advise you!”\*

Some such summary method may, indeed, appear to be suggested by the circumstances of the case; some such method might, were it possible, be perhaps the shortest and simplest way to the attainment of our end; but we cannot thus at will step back into the olden time; we cannot borrow the garments and the gyves of a bygone age; it is not in regress, but in progress, that our solution and our safety must be sought,—not in importing and engrafting the obsolete things of the

\* Latter Day Pamphlets, No. I. p. 55.

past, but in drawing on the resources which lie dormant, but ready, in the vast storehouse of the future.

The relation of slavery passed away with the age to which it was appropriate and permissible: the relation of vassalage or modified serfdom succeeded. In this a great step was made towards the recognition of defined and positive rights on the part of the labourer, and of defined and positive limits to the claims of his employer. It was an intermediate condition between the servile and the equal state. The connection between the parties was commonly permanent and life-long; it was far more complex than either that which it replaced or that which it preceded; the serf had certain fixed obligations to discharge, in return for which he enjoyed the patronage and protection of his master. He lived upon his master's land, often in his master's house; the same families served the same chiefs from generation to generation, till they became a portion of them; they were identified with their interests, partook of their pride, shared their fortunes, were illuminated by their splendour. In this relation, amid much that was rude and brutal, there was also much that was touching and affectionate. On the part of the vassal, there was often hereditary attachment, sublime devotion, and a marvellous abnegation of self. He respected his feudal lord as a superior being, loyalty to whom was not unfrequently a stronger feeling than the family affections. On the part of the master, the sentiments of regard and protection were proportionately developed; he looked upon his dependents as a secondary class of children, whom he loved, and whom both pride and duty bound him to foster, to govern, and to serve. In war, the vassal shared the dangers and hardships of his lord, and stood by him through captivity and death; in peace he tilled his lands, ranged in his woods, and sported in his park; in sickness or distress he was certain of attention and

assistance ; and when aged or disabled, he often tended his master's children and fed at his master's board. In the obedience of the inferior there was nothing mean or servile ; in the authority of the superior there was nothing arrogant or oppressive ;—love on both sides hallowed the unequal union. In theory, probably, if inequalities as great as then prevailed were to be the permanent law of society, the relation was as perfect as could be formed ; and even now, numbers look back to it with a sort of regretful admiration, and are unwilling to believe that it may not still linger, or can ever wholly pass away. In its revival, the Young England party seek the remedy for the disjointed relations of society ; they would push us back into the middle ages, and re-organise modern life upon the old foundation. The desire is natural ; and there is much beauty in the picture which they draw. A class of submissive and attached dependents, sedulous about their duties and unanxious about their rights, looking to their master for the guidance of their course, and taking from him the key-note of their life ; and a chief or employer, penetrated with the responsibility imposed upon him, proud of the trust reposed in him, and grateful for the attachment shown him, dutifully using his superior wisdom to direct, and his superior power to shield and succour, those confided to his charge, and repaying their pathetic devotion with a devotion as touching and as true ;—such a state of things, could it be recalled or realised, would be a welcome exchange for that which now too commonly prevails. But to make it possible, to make it righteous, you must revive, not only the circumstances out of which that relation rose, and by virtue of which it subsisted, but the sentiments which hallowed it and infused into it a sacredness and a beauty not of necessity its own. You must recreate the instinctive loyalty to rank and power, now shaken to its



base by democratic notions ; the quiet hereditary conviction—now disturbed for ever—that the superiority on the one side, and the inferiority on the other, were permanent and providential facts, to be accepted, as of course, like any other law of nature; the undoubting creed—now desecrated and dethroned—that the existing order of things was holy, just, and true. If you cannot do this, you may set up the old form, but you cannot breathe into it the old life ; the whole fabric will be artificial and unhallowed ; the authority will corrupt the man who wields it ; the obedience will degrade the man who pays it ; and over the whole contrivance will brood the blighting and paralysing spirit of a sham.

The third relation between employer and employed is that which subsists in all democratic communities, and which is more or less recognised and established in proportion as the democracy is pure and perfect. It is that which already prevails in France and in America, and which is theoretically received, and is fast being translated into practice in this country. It is that of simple contract, of equal bargain, of independent arrangement between the parties. In democracies there can be no other. The master and the servant, the employer and the workman, are equal in the eye of the law. The superior has no longer recognised power over the inferior, as in the servile relation ; the vassal no longer needs the protection of his lord, as in the feudal times ; the supremacy of law is over all ; by the fundamental assumption of democracy, every man is as good and as free as his neighbour, as entitled to think for himself, as qualified to act for himself, as competent to distinguish and to take care of his own interests. The servant contracts to perform certain defined services for his master in return for a fixed consideration ; he can leave him when his term of contract is expired ; he can compel him to perform his portion of the contract ;

neither party is *obliged*, for, by the supposition of the case, each party obtains an *equivalent* for what he gives. In like manner the workman engages to perform a certain amount and kind of labour for his employer, in consideration of a stipulated remuneration; the employer can exact no more and no other labour than that agreed upon; the employed can compel a rigid adherence to the contract as easily as the employer; the former has sold his exertions, and he renders them—the latter has purchased these exertions, and he pays the purchase money; if either has made a bad bargain—*caveat emptor*—he was free to do so; if, from any extraneous circumstance, either party was placed under a disadvantage, and parted with his money or his services for what was not a full and fair equivalent, the theory was not fully translated into practice; but the law knows nothing of such exceptions, and the advantage which was on one side to-day, may be on the other side to-morrow. Redundant numbers in the labour-market may compel the labourer to sell his services for less than a comfortable maintenance; deficient numbers (in proportion to the field of employment and the capital seeking employment) may compel the master to purchase those services at a price which leaves him less than a reasonable profit: these are varying accidents, which in no way affect the theory of their mutual relation. Where all men are free and equal before the law, the basis of the relation between employer and employed can obviously be no other than we have stated; for if, in addition to the stipulated equivalent in wages, the workman demands from his employer assistance, forbearance, protection, and control, he admits his inferiority; if, in addition to the stipulated equivalent of service, the master demand from his servant respect, submission, gratitude, obedience in matters beyond the

limits of their contract, he in his turn virtually denies the equality and violates the freedom. In a state in which the law recognises and the people tolerate no differences between man and man, there—*apart from the reciprocal obligations of citizens and Christians*—no man can owe another anything, or claim from another anything, beyond the terms of their mutual agreement: “We cannot find it: ’tis not in the bond.”

Now, in France, and the free states of America, all this is admitted and assumed: it is not yet fully recognised in England. Though the law here, as there, invests every man with equal freedom, yet the habits and notions of democracy have not yet so completely pervaded our minds, and penetrated all our social relations, as with them.

“I never saw a man in the United States,” says M. de Tocqueville, “who reminded me of that class of confidential and attached servants of whom we retain a reminiscence in Europe. The Americans are not only unacquainted with the kind of man, but it is hardly possible to make them understand that such ever existed. It is scarcely less difficult for them to conceive it, than for us to form a correct notion of what a slave was among the Romans, or a serf in the middle ages. In democracies, servants are not only equal among themselves, but they are in some sort the equals of their masters. Why then has the former a right to command, and what compels the latter to obey?—the free and temporary consent of both their wills. Neither of them is by nature inferior to the other; he only becomes so for a time by covenant. Within the terms of this covenant, and during its continuance, the one is a servant, the other a master; beyond it, they are two citizens of the commonwealth—two men. The precise limits of authority and obedience are as clearly settled in the mind of the one as in that of the other. The master holds the contract of service to be the only source of his power, and the servant regards it as the only cause of his obedience. On their part, masters require nothing of their servants but the faithful and rigorous performance of

the covenant; they do not ask for marks of respect\*; they do not claim their love or devoted attachment; it is enough that as servants they are exact and honest.”†

Now in England, we are yet far from this complete comprehension of our case. We have not yet clearly perceived, nor frankly and loyally accepted, the change which time has introduced into the relations of the several classes. The habits, notions, and expectations of the aristocratic condition have survived and been carried over, mutilated and infirm, into the democratic condition. We are in a transition state, in which men's minds fluctuate between the aristocratic notion of subjection, and the democratic notion of free, optional, limited, and purchased obedience. Each party is disposed to borrow some of the *claims* of the defunct relation, without the corresponding obligations. The master cannot divest himself of the idea, that in virtue of his rank, he is entitled to deference and submission; and the workman conceives that, in virtue of his com-

\* The following anecdote is very illustrative of our text:—"At Boston I was told of a gentleman in the neighbourhood who, having engaged a farm servant, found him very satisfactory in all respects, except that he invariably came into his master's room with his hat on. 'John,' said he to him one day, 'you always keep your hat on when you come into the room.' 'Well, sir, haven't I a right to?' 'Yes, I suppose you have.' 'Well, if I have a right to, why shouldn't I?' This was a poser from one man to another, where all have equal rights. So after a moment's reflection, the gentleman asked, 'Now, John, what'll you take—how much more wages will you ask to take off your hat when you come in?' 'Well, that requires consideration, I guess.' 'Take the thing into consideration, then, and tell me to-morrow morning.' The morrow comes. 'Well, John, have you considered what additional wages you are to have for taking your hat off?' 'Well, sir, I guess it's worth a dollar a month.' 'It's settled then, John, you shall have another dollar a month;' and the gentleman retained a good servant, while John's hat was always in his hand when he entered the house in future."—*Johnston's Notes on North America*, vol. ii. p. 425.

† Democracy in America, vol. iv. p. 43.

parative poverty, he is entitled to assistance in difficulty, and to protection from the consequences of his own folly and improvidence. Each party expects from the other something more than is expressed or implied in the covenant between them. The workman, asserting his equality and independence, claims from his employer services which only inferiority can legitimately demand; the master, tacitly and in his heart denying this equality and independence, repudiates claims which only the validity of this plea of equality and independence can effectually nonsuit or liquidate. Ideas on both sides want clearing up. If the master exacts more than stipulated service, he must reciprocate with more than stipulated wages; if the workman expects more than just and covenanted money remuneration, he must render more than bare and covenanted labour. If the former demand, in addition to his bargain, deference, gratitude, and affection, he must show, in addition, interest, succour, and regard (or, as in the case just cited, he must purchase these or their counterfeits with added dollars); if the latter demand forbearance, self-denial, and personal attention, he must deserve these by the fore-named correlatives.

In that democratic state of things, then, which prevails elsewhere, which England has already reached in theory, and is fast approaching in actual fact, the relation between employer and employed is and must be that of simple contract — a contract into which the covenanting parties may insert whatever conditions they may mutually agree upon, but which contract contains the sum total of the respective claims and obligations *arising out of the relation into which they have voluntarily entered with each other*. They have, as we shall presently see, other reciprocal claims and obligations; but these arise out of another and wholly distinct relation, which must not be confounded with the one

we are now treating of. It is of the last importance, both in order to prevent mutual disappointment and irritation, and to establish a sound basis for action, that this distinction should be clearly understood, and constantly kept in view by the contracting parties themselves, and by those moralists and legislators who are in the habit of dealing with this subject. We therefore take the broadest democratic ground—the ground of the future, even more than of the accomplished and completed present—when we affirm, that the reciprocal duties of employers and employed, *as such*, are comprised within the limits of their covenant; and that it is a mistake to attempt to engraft on this “meagre relation” (as it has been termed), the claims and obligations either of the servile or the feudal state. But this “meagre relation” is obviously not the only one in which the parties stand to one another; nor are the obligations of slavery or vassalage the only ones which can be engrafted upon it. In remembering this, we may find both the solution of our problem, and the dissipation of apparent contradictions. The employer and employed, even in the most democratic state, stand to each other, as do all the rest of the community, not in this relation only, but in that of fellow-citizenship, and of Christian neighbourhood. *What, then, are the reciprocal duties and claims which arise out of this superadded and inescapable relation?* As fellow citizens, every man owes to every man rigid justice and respect for each others’ rights; as neighbours, all owe to all mutual sympathy and aid. “Who is my neighbour?” My neighbour is the man whom I can help out of the ditch, the man into whose wounds I can pour oil and wine. My neighbour is the man who needs my services, and whom I am in a position to serve; and the degree of neighbourhood and the imperativeness of his claim are in proportion to his need and to my power.



It is true that the matter is somewhat complicated in appearance by the remains of the old feudal relation which still linger among the agricultural population, and the incidental powers which landed property occasionally gives to its possessors, as well as by the virtual inequality which redundant numbers sometimes create in the bargain between employers and employed in the departments of manufacturing industry; but the former complication is yearly dying out, and the latter is subject to constant variations; we can even imagine that the ultimate results of Irish emigration may place the inequality on the other side. It is to be observed also, that in the case of domestic servants, another complication is introduced by the family relation being partially superadded to that of employer and employed; but on the whole, and exceptions apart, we are satisfied that the view we have taken of the special relation we are considering is the true one, and the only one which will render possible a clear conception and scientific definition of its duties and its rights. Let us proceed to elucidate our position.

Over and above, then, the strict fulfilment of the special contract entered into, every man owes service to every man whom he is in a position to serve: the nature of this position points out the sort of service to be rendered, and its superiority points out the degree. Our power is the measure of our duty; and the sole reason why the employer owes more than other men to the people he employs is, that his connection with them is closer, and his relation to them more specific and defined, and his means and capacity of serving them consequently greater. The circumstance of having entered into an engagement with them to exchange his money against their labour in fair equivalent proportions, does not of itself confer upon them any claims, or entail upon him any obligations, any more than the circumstance of

having sold to a customer a piece of cloth for an equivalent bank-note would do: the fact, that this mutually profitable and strictly equal engagement, brings him into a relation with them, which augments his power of influencing their conduct, guiding their character, and affecting their happiness, *does* generate such obligations and such claims. His responsibilities spring not out of the contract itself, but out of its secondary consequences. They are entailed upon him, not as the employer of these men, but because his employment of them makes him in a peculiar sense their "neighbour." If the manufacturer and the country squire owe duties to their workmen, from which the independent gentleman living idly on his income exempts himself, it is not, as this latter and the world at large are apt loosely to imagine, because they have accepted from those they employ services for which money wages are only a partial and inadequate repayment. On the contrary, by the punctual discharge of their portion of a fair and equitable bargain, they have already performed a duty and rendered a service to their workpeople, which the idle gentleman has forgotten or shirked. They have assisted in increasing that national wealth, which sooner or later, directly or indirectly, must benefit every individual in that nation. The idle gentleman has not even done this. Like the manufacturer whom he blames, he has omitted to discharge the duties of protector, assistant, or Christian neighbour, to the poor labourer; unlike the manufacturer, he has not even rendered him the service of making his capabilities productive; he has not even purchased at a fair price the article the poor man has to sell. There has always seemed to us great folly, and some feelings even less excusable, in the abuse which the Pharisaic fundholder and the lazy mortgagee—who have carefully shunned the responsibilities and anxieties

which belong to an industrial connection with the working classes — lavish on the great employers of labour for collecting together large numbers of workmen and rendering their labour available for the joint benefit of both parties, as if by so doing they had incurred, more than other men, the obligation of supporting, instructing, and controlling them. These complacent critics of the bearers of burdens which they will not touch themselves, forget that the duty which the employer owes to his people after he has paid their wages sacred as it is, is a duty which belongs to him in common with every citizen and every neighbour — which they, as well as he, are called upon to perform in their sphere and to the utmost of their power; and that they, who have done nothing, cannot shift upon him, who at all events has done something, the entire burden of their common obligations. Of two equally rich men, living in the same neighbourhood, possessed of the same authority, exercising or qualified to exercise the same influence over the poor around them, the laborious manufacturer owes to them no more obvious duties, incurs no more sacred obligation, than the idle millionaire. The tie of Christian "neighbourhood" is as close in the one case as in the other: the claims of Christian neighbourhood may be preferred as undeniably in the one case as in the other. The former has discharged the simple duty of employer in directing and remunerating the employment; there remains, over and above, the duty of man to man, and this his wealthy fellow citizen owes as well as he. If he has greater influence over the conduct and character of his workpeople greater means of aiding them, greater power of controlling them, then in virtue thereof is his vocation wider and his obligation more imperative; but it is so in virtue of his influence, not in virtue of his mastership. Again, of two poor families, living near a great man

equally needing his assistance, equally guidable by his counsel, equally swayed by his example, but one of whom he employs, and the other he does not, he owes to the former no more than to the latter, for his obligations as employer are already discharged by the performance of his portion of the contract; and his obligations as neighbour remain, and are equally binding towards both.

It is unquestionably true that this equality of power, out of which equality of duty springs, can seldom exist as completely as we have supposed. The position of master, even in this comparatively democratic age, will generally give a vantage-ground of influence, and imply a vantage-ground of social and intellectual superiority, which mere rank, wealth, and residence can seldom bestow. On the other hand, especially in the manufacturing districts of this country, the same position entails certain consequences which materially impair this influence, and sometimes go far wholly to counteract it. Between two parties who bargain together there is almost inevitably something of mistrust and antagonism. Where genuine conscientiousness and love of justice does not prevail on both sides, it is difficult for them to believe in their mutual disinterestedness; and the best advice of the master is often neglected, and his wisest efforts thwarted, by the suspicion that both are dictated by some sinister and selfish motives. Hence a relation of simple neighbourhood, into which no pecuniary considerations enter, is not unfrequently more easily efficient for good than the apparently more powerful one of employment. Still, in a majority of cases, the position of employer does, and always will, carry with it certain means of influence which, in spite of counterbalancing disadvantages, involve the gravest responsibility—a responsibility which is in a direct ratio to the social and intellectual superiority implied in the position, and which

diminishes in proportion as equality either in condition or intelligence is approached.

The relations of employer to employed may be classed under four heads :—manufacturing employment ; agricultural labour ; employment in shops ; and domestic service. In the following remarks we shall chiefly have the first of these in view, but the principles evolved will, with slight modifications, apply themselves to the others also. The manufacturer is the employer of labour on the greatest scale ; he is the party who, inaccurately enough, is popularly regarded as most negligent of the duties of the relation ; and he is the party whose position towards his workpeople most nearly, in actual fact, approaches to that which we have defined as the democratic form of that relation. His workpeople are the most intelligent and democratic portion of the labouring classes ; the difference between his *rank* and theirs is less marked and fixed than in the other cases, from the greater facility of rising and the greater number who have risen from the lowest position ; and lastly the large sunk capital of the master gives to the men an advantage in their bargain with him which no other class of workpeople enjoy.

The first duty which the great employer of labour owes to those who work for him is to make his business succeed. This is his first duty, because it is the primary object which he has in view in starting it. No man builds a mill, or commences a manufacture, for the distinct purpose of employing or benefiting others. His paramount and special aim is to earn a living for himself, or to improve his condition in the world ; his desire and intention of doing justice to and ameliorating the condition of those he employs is, however zealous and sincere, an indirect and secondary purpose, and the man who forgets or fails in his primary is not likely to succeed in his derivative object. *Secondly*, it is his first

duty, because it is necessary to the performance of his other duties and the attainment of his other ends. If he does not make his business answer, all his plans and arrangements for the improvement of his workmen, however wise or benevolent, necessarily fall to the ground. *Thirdly*, it is his first duty, because, when the existence of numbers is bound up in his success, any failure or catastrophe on his part involves numbers in misery. It is true that he has at all events employed them regularly and paid them well as long as he was prosperous, and has so far done them much service, and that but for his undertaking they might never have known what full employment was; and so far he cannot be accused of having deteriorated their position; but it is possible, also, that he may have withdrawn some of them from more permanent sources of occupation, and in any case it remains true that want of success on his part, and consequent stoppage or frequent interruption of his works, is certain to entail grievous misery on all whom he employs. This obligation to make his undertaking answer involves several matters which are not usually enough regarded in the light of duties. In the first place he is bound not to enter upon it without capital sufficient to carry him over those periods of depression and loss to which all manufacturers are subject. It is quite true that his workmen ought theoretically, and often may, and in time probably will, save enough out of the earnings of prosperous times to meet and bear the adverse times which follow. It is theoretically true no doubt — and, when social and intellectual equality shall be more nearly reached, may be laid down as a principle — that the workman has no right to throw upon his employer the duty of being provident *for both*, and of not only paying him good wages when the concern is profitable, but of continuing to pay him wages when it has ceased to be so; and this is ample reason why the master



should not be expected, as he now so often is, to give his men full employment and their usual wages when he can only do so at a loss to himself; but it does not exonerate him from the duty of counting the cost before he begins the tower — of ascertaining that he possesses the means of meeting, without ruin to himself and his dependants, those fluctuations and vicissitudes which should be calculated upon beforehand as part of the ordinary chances of trade. It is part of the tacit contract between manufacturers and their operatives — and in this it differs from the case of hand-loom weavers and their employers — not indeed that they should be kept fully at work during all the changing fortunes of commercial life, but that that degree of steady employment should be secured to them which the capital of masters in general has enabled them to establish as the custom of the trade.

In the second place, this obligation of success imposes upon the employer the duty of not allowing any benevolent plans or sentiments of lax kindness to interfere with the main purpose in view. The secondary aim must not be allowed to override the primary one. He must not scruple to reduce wages where the well-being of the undertaking renders this change indispensable; nor must he gratify himself with the luxury of paying higher wages than his neighbours, either out of vanity or from benevolence. If he does this, it is rarely that he will reap gratitude; it is still more rarely that he will escape serious loss and crippled means, if not positive impoverishment. But, above all, he must be strict in exacting from his workpeople the performance of their part of the bargain. He must not allow any moral qualities or personal recommendations to pass muster as a substitute for the stipulated quantity or quality of work. The rigid enforcement of the covenanted terms is equally essential for the good of both parties. A lax

and indulgent master will never be successful, and scarcely ever popular.

It may, perhaps, be observed that these remarks are unnecessary, as few masters are likely to err on the side of forgetting the main money-making object of their business, or of postponing it to philanthropic considerations. But even if this were more universally true than it is, our observations would not be the less called for, to meet the precepts and inculcations of those legislating moralists who urge that it is the duty, and imagine that it is within the power, of the great employer to prefer his workmen's interest to his own—to afford them, independently of considerations of profit, wages adequate to their comfortable maintenance, and to continue to employ them, or to support them in idleness, after they have ceased to be competent and efficient operatives. Neither of these things can the manufacturer be called upon to do, because neither is compatible with that professional success which is his primary aim and his first duty, both to his workpeople and to himself. It seems, no doubt, selfish and hard to dismiss workmen who have served us long, and given us the exertions of their most active and energetic years, as soon as, from age or failing powers, they become incompetent to the full toil of their several departments. It seems hard, too, as men grow old and grey, to reduce their remuneration in the ratio of their diminished capability of service. All men of benevolence, who are large employers of labour, feel this to be one of the most painful necessities laid upon them. Yet it is clearly both just and inevitable. It is just, because, on our fundamental supposition, the bargain has been a fair one, and the services rendered during the prime of life were paid for at their full value, and in that stipulated payment a retiring pension for old age was not included. It is necessary, since, if a concern is to be worked by old

servants, because it seems unfeeling to replace them by younger and more efficient hands; or if full wages are to be paid to them after they have ceased to be equal to full work; or if the concern is to be burdened with the maintenance of the aged and infirm who have served it in their better days,—no profits made in these times, at least, could enable such a manufacturing undertaking to keep its head above water. A provision for those periods of weakness and incapacity, which come sooner or later to us all, should, and in a healthy state of things almost always may, be laid by out of the earnings of those years of vigour which have been passed in steady labour, and sold for an adequate remuneration. Most manufacturers do endeavour to keep old servants by them as long as they can do so with safety, and continue to pay them more than they are strictly worth: not a few have carried this too far, and have thereby, for a time or permanently, impaired the efficiency and imperilled the success of their concerns. Very generally, when compelled to dismiss them, or displace them to lower and easier work, they ease their fall with a pension; but this is, or should be, done rather in their individual capacity as kind-hearted “neighbours,” than as employers. It never can be the manufacturer’s duty, for it never can be safe for himself, or real kindness or justice to the whole body of his operatives, to work with inefficient or decrepit tools, whether those tools be human or mechanical.

The same considerations may serve to show us the mistake of those who conceive it to be the duty of the employer to pay such wages to his workpeople as will supply them with an adequate subsistence, though those wages should be higher than will leave him a profit, and higher than many others are willing to accept. The first, it is evident, he cannot long continue to do. If he pays a rate of wages which leaves him no profit, or

none worth the risk and toil of carrying on the business, he will soon cease to pay wages at all. But the duty of always refusing to pay lower wages than will afford a decent subsistence to the labourer—however great may be the numbers, and however clamorous the necessities of those who are anxious for employment at even still reduced earnings, and who prefer a scanty livelihood to none at all—has lately been maintained in all its breadth by a writer of singular logical clearness, candour, and ability.\* Wrong as we think him, he is yet a most valuable reasoner, because he sees and is willing to accept the consequences which flow from the position he assumes. He considers it heinous to “force down wages to the market minimum” and the “clear duty of a master to employ a few on decent remuneration, rather than many on the verge of ruin.” To go fully into this discussion now would divert us from our more immediate subject; but a passing remark will show where, as it seems to us, the fallacy of the view lies. In the first place it is inaccurate and misleading to speak of employers as “forcing down wages.” This is not the *modus operandi*. Employers are seldom the chief agents in this process. The practical question is not whether a master shall force down wages needlessly and artificially, but whether, in order artificially to maintain a rate avowedly above the market price of labour, he shall turn a deaf ear to destitute multitudes *who come to him begging for employment*;—whether he shall be guilty of the cruelty of turning from his door men in vigorous life and in the prime of their capacities, and with families dependent upon them, who beseech him at once to benefit himself and them by giving them work at lower wages than those which he is actually paying—preferring scanty earnings to no earnings at

\* “Prospective Review,” vol. xxvii. p. 276.

all. Surely, it is at least as harsh to refuse their prayer—to bid them go and starve—as it would be to reduce the wages of his own workpeople. The theoretical question reduces itself to this:—whether it is better that the “wages fund” should be confined in ample portions to a limited number, or be distributed in scantier allotments over all claimants;—whether some shall be comfortable and the rest be starved, or whether all should “share and share alike.” Our personal feelings, as those of nearly every man, would probably prefer (with the writer we are criticising) the former arrangement, if the rejected claimants for employment could either be secure of other work, or be supported in idleness by the rest of the community; but we doubt the practicability, or permanence, or wisdom, or justice of these alternatives—and we are scarcely prepared, as this writer is, to face even starvation as a preferable thing to a lowering of the price of labour. In the second place, the same principle, carried out, would forbid a master manufacturer to “work short time:” when periods of pressure come, he must not keep his men together and divide the pressure equally among them all; he must dismiss some and retain the others in full employment. Yet this very “short time” the reviewer, in the passage we are citing, speaks of with approval as a just and humane contrivance. In the third place, the reviewer commits the common oversight of forgetting the consumer in his exclusive gaze at the producer. He does not appear to have remembered that from lower wages arises increased cheapness; that from increased cheapness spring up extended markets; that from extended markets flows augmented employment; and that augmented employment tends to make wages *actually* higher, while increased cheapness makes them again *virtually* higher, by making them go further. Thus, in the natural course of events, those very wages

become sufficient for comfortable maintenance which it was held sinful to offer, because so scanty and inadequate. The manufacturer who employs 500 men at moderate wages, where he could only have employed 300 at the high wages which the reviewer would make obligatory and permanent, has this to set off against the first evils of a reduction—that he employs 200 men who would otherwise have starved or subsisted on charity; that he enables many to buy shirts who would otherwise have gone without them; and that he makes the wages of all the 500 go further, that is, purchase more, than they did before. It cannot be replied that these 200 men whom he took in, would, if rejected, have found profitable occupation elsewhere: if this were the case they would never have solicited work at insufficient earnings.

But the practical answer to this reviewer, for our present purpose, is simply this: that the manufacturer who, by rejecting those who offered their services at reduced wages, attempted to keep up an artificial price of labour, would soon find himself distanced in the race; his competitors would be carrying on their establishments at less cost than himself; his means would be crippled, and his profits disappear and be replaced by loss; and the ultimate effect of his unscientific benevolence would be, that his power of doing practical good would be at an end. If it were attempted to evade this consequence by maintaining the artificial price of labour by legislative or by any over-riding social influence, and the attempt should be successful, the only result could be the transference of our superiority to foreign rivals, and the diminution of demand for our fettered productions. The individual manufacturer in the one case, the whole nation of manufacturers in the other, would find that the issue of their kindness—the consequence of their resolution to give good wages only to a few—would end in their having



no wages at all to give to any. The plain truth is, that neither the most boundless benevolence, nor the most consummate ability, can fight against the clear moral and material laws of the universe. If the field of employment is too limited for the numbers who crowd into it, no power and no goodness can prevent wages from falling; and all schemes, whether old or new, *for enabling labourers to be redundant, and yet to evade the consequences of their redundancy*, must come to nought.

Having secured his position and performed his first duty, of making his undertaking profitable, and enabling himself to keep his people employed, the employer is at leisure to sift and attend to secondary claims; and of these the duty of making his factory and the processes carried on there as healthy as care and sanitary science can render them, will probably present itself to his mind as one of paramount clearness and importance. This is the more incumbent upon him, as it is little likely to be thought of or demanded by his workmen. It is a topic on which his cultivated intelligence is almost sure to place him far ahead of them; and out of the superiority, as we have seen, springs the obligation. We cannot place this matter in a better light than by quoting a few lines from one of the works at the head of this article—"The Claims of Labour."

"It would seem an obvious thing enough that, where a man collects a number of his fellow-men together to work for him, it would be right to provide a sufficient supply of air for them. But this does not appear to have been considered as an axiom; and in truth we cannot much wonder at this neglect, when we find that those who have to provide for the amusement of men, and who would be likely, therefore, to consult the health and convenience of those whom they bring together, should sedulously shut out the pure air, as if they disliked letting anything in that did not pay for admission. In most grievances, the people aggrieved are very sensible at the time of the evil they are undergoing; which is not, however, the case with those who

suffer from an impure atmosphere. They are in general almost unconscious of what they are enduring. This makes it the more desirable, in the case we are considering, that the manufacturer himself, or the government, or the community at large, should be alive to the mischief arising from want of ventilation in these crowded assemblages of men, and to the absolute necessity of providing remedies for it. . . .

“Each branch of manufactures has its peculiar dangers and disadvantages; and it behoves the master to be frequently directing his attention to remedy the peculiar evils of his manufacture. He is to be the pioneer to find out for his men ways of avoiding these evils. It cannot be his duty to study only how to make his fabric cheaper, and not to take any pains to see how it can be made to cost less of human life. . . . In a thickly-peopled country like this, an employer of labour, if his work does not require much skill, can generally get any number of men to serve him, which would be a strange reason, however, for making the health of any one amongst those whom he does employ less precious in his eyes. Human labour may be ever so abundant, but human life cannot be cheap.”

As far as large manufacturing establishments are concerned, a vast improvement has taken place in this respect in the last twenty years, and in the best of them little is left to be desired; but in the minor workshops, and especially in the work-rooms of tailors and sempstresses, the employers are still, for the most part, unawakened to the importance and imperativeness of this class of obligations. The health of thousands is sacrificed from pure ignorance and want of thought. Truly may the author of “The Claims” remark that “the careless cruelty in the world outweighs all the rest.”

A third mode of serving those who work for him, which the position and capital of the great employer of labour generally place within his reach, and which should be especially valued by him, is the providing for them decent and comfortable dwellings. In villages and in country districts this is almost always in his

power; in towns often so; and always, if he can associate others with him in his plans for the attainment of the object, and in his estimate of its importance. On the whole, we are bound to say that the conduct of the great proportion of manufacturers in this matter is deserving of high praise. In almost all country establishments, and in most of those in the smaller towns, they have been careful to surround their mills with substantial and well-built cottages, often with gardens attached to them, containing four rooms, kitchen, scullery, and two bed-rooms,—cottages which are let for rents which at once remunerate the owner and are easy for the occupier. In large towns, like Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, and Sheffield, it has not been so easy to do this. It is not often possible there to have the dwellings of the workmen close to the mill, as this latter must be near rivers or canals for the sake of the water, and the land so situated becomes too valuable to be used for mere cottages. In these cases, therefore, the workpeople seldom live in houses belonging to their employer: they are scattered over the town, and occupy streets built generally by some speculator, who looks to nothing but a secure and ample return for his outlay. But even in these cases much may be done, and much has been done, by benevolent employers, to introduce a better style of house, and ampler accommodation, both by building "Model Lodging Houses" of their own, and by promoting the formation of "Societies for Improving the Dwellings of the Poor," such as already exist in the metropolis and elsewhere. By efforts of this sort, combined with the tardy but now energetic attention paid by the constituted authorities to sanitary regulations, a vast amelioration has of late years taken place in the houses of the working classes, both as to healthiness and amount of accommodation, at least as far as the manufacturing population is concerned. But

in the prosecution of plans of this sort two points require especial consideration.

In the first place, the employer is not called upon by any duty to build houses for his people of a more costly kind, nor to let them at a lower rent, than will afford him a fair remuneration for his outlay ;—and this for the reasons alleged when speaking of that which we laid down as his first and paramount obligation. Nay, more, he is bound not to do so ; for if he does, he is not doing justice, he is conferring charity ; he is less setting an example likely to be followed, than affording a beacon likely to be shunned ; and he is interfering with the property of those who build houses for the sake of letting them at a rent which will yield a fair interest for their money, just as much, and in the same way, as if he were to sell the goods he produces for less than they cost him. Some mischief has been done by neglecting this simple rule ; but, if judiciously managed, there is scarcely any portion of a manufacturer's expenditure which pays him better than that which is devoted to building a superior class of cottages for his workpeople. His rent is secure ; and the people are *generally* now willing to pay a higher rent for a better house than formerly.

“ In this good work the employers of labour may be expected to come prominently forward. Many a man will speculate in all kinds of remote undertakings ; and it will never occur to him that one of the most admirable uses to which he might put his spare capital would be to provide fit dwelling-places for the labouring population around him. He is not asked to build almshouses. On the contrary, let him take care to ensure, as far as he can, a good return for the outlay, in order to avoid what may possibly be an unjust interference with other men's property ; and also, and chiefly, that his building for the poor may not end in an isolated act of benevolence, but may indicate a mode of employing capital likely to be followed by others.

Still, it is to their benevolence, and not to any money motives, that I would mainly appeal. The devout feeling which in former days raised august cathedrals throughout the land might find an employment to the full as religious in building a humble row of cottages, if they tell of honour to the Great Creator, in care for those whom he has bidden us to care for, and are thus, as it were, silently dedicated to his name."

This is pre-eminently true, as well as beautiful. Those who have witnessed the effect of a filthy and crowded cottage—where the sexes are in close and perilous contact night and day, where decency is difficult and comfort impossible—in breaking down the barriers of modesty, in obliterating all the sweet and saving attractions of a home, in weakening and desecrating all domestic ties, in brutalising the manners and lowering the desires; and those, on the other hand, who have traced the influence of an ample, well-ordered, and wholesome dwelling, in eliciting all that is good, in cultivating all that is gentle and decorous, in fortifying all that is strong, and repressing all that is evil, in the nature of the poor, will feel with us that the estimate of the good which, by attention and assistance on this point, the great employer of labour is able to accomplish, can scarcely be too high. But is he to stop here? Having provided decent dwellings for his workmen, is he—under the relation democratically based—to compel them to keep them decent? Having performed his duty in affording them ample accommodation for all purposes of propriety and comfort, has he—being no longer their feudal superior, but only their fellow in an equal covenant—the further duty of forbidding them to overcrowd these dwellings by taking in lodgers for the sake of the profit thus obtained? We will specify a case in point. A benevolent proprietor, desirous to give all his dependants the power of a complete and easy separation of the

sexes, built a number of cottages with three bedrooms, so that the parents might occupy one, the boys another, and the girls a third; and found them willing to pay an increased rent for the increased accommodation. But he soon found that the result was simply that more lodgers were taken, and the inmates were as indecorously and promiscuously crowded as before. Had he a right, and was it his duty, to interfere to prevent this indirect defeat of his purposes? Clearly he had the right; not as their employer or superior, but as one of the parties to a reciprocal engagement. He could have no right, as employer, to dictate to those he employed any portion of their household arrangements; but as landlord he was obviously entitled to lay down the conditions on which alone he would let his houses. Whether much good could be done by enforcing this right; or whether, if enforced, the motives to occupy one of these superior dwellings would not be so weakened or destroyed as to render the erection of them no longer a paying speculation, is much more questionable. Probably the plan practically advisable would be found to be this; to build only *a few* of these superior dwellings for those who were competent to appreciate and willing to inhabit them at the rent and on the conditions prescribed, and to trust to time, and the slow and silent influence of education and example, to create a demand for similar accommodation among the other workpeople. The effect of too rigid terms upon people unable to perceive the judiciousness or the importance of them would probably only have the effect of driving them into an inferior set of dwellings, where they would be at liberty to be as dirty and as crowded as they pleased. The erection both of better family dwellings, and of model lodging-houses for unmarried men and girls, is sure to meet, and has met, with much disappointment



and discomfiture at the outset; but if persevered in with caution and tact, can scarcely fail to work a gradual though a slow amendment in the habits of the poor.

But while there is much to applaud and to imitate in the conduct of the manufacturing employers of labour, as regards their efforts to supply fitting house accommodation for their workmen, the proceedings of many great landed proprietors in the south of England offer a scandalous and painful contrast. Not only are the dwellings of the peasants in too many districts scanty, miserable, ill drained, and ill built, but of late years it has been largely the custom to discourage and even prohibit the building of new cottages; and even, where opportunity offered, to pull down any that were vacated. The object of this policy was to keep down the poor rates, by preventing any increase of numbers from obtaining settlements in the parish; and its operation has been, in the first place, to cause a most noxious and indecent overcrowding of the remaining dwellings; and, secondly, to drive a large proportion of the peasantry to reside in adjoining towns and villages, whence they have several miles to walk to their labour in the morning, and whither they return at night, wearied and foot-sore. The extent to which this system has been carried, as well as the evil it entailed, was partially unveiled by the official report, published some years ago, "On the employment of women and children in agriculture," and it has since been much increased.\* The moral as well as

\* The extent to which this system has in some places been carried may be conjectured from the last census, where we find no fewer than 50 districts or unions in which the number of inhabited houses had diminished between 1841 and 1851; and in 31 of these the population had diminished also. There are, besides, many parishes in which the number of houses has been stationary, or nearly so.

physical mischief of the system is very great, and its cruelty and selfishness utterly inexcusable. For one landowner, or the combined landowners in the parish to say: "We have here no employment for any increase of the population, and therefore we will not encourage or facilitate that increase by providing or permitting house accommodation for it," may be fair and right; but for them to say: "We will compel those who till our fields and reap our harvests to live at a distance from those fields, and so double the amount of their fatigue and increase their hours of labour with no added remuneration, in order that we may throw upon others our legal burden of maintaining them in times of destitution," is about the most naked robbery and the most barbarous injustice ever perpetrated under the forms of civilisation and behind the screen of law. It is not only the neglect of a duty; it is the commission of a crime.

Fourthly. There is one great service which a master may render to his workmen, and which, in virtue of his superior knowledge or means of knowledge, he is especially bound to render. Among manufacturing operatives, shop assistants, and domestic servants, the habit of saving is now general—almost universal. These savings, most of them, are in the form of weekly subscrip-

Those districts where an actual diminution took place are as follows:—

In Hampshire	-	-	1	Brought up	-	31
Suffolk	-	-	2	Carmarthenshire	-	3
Wiltshire	-	-	4	Pembroke	-	1
Dorset	-	-	2	Cardigan	-	4
Devon	-	-	6	Brecknock	-	2
Cornwall	-	-	5	Radnor	-	2
Somerset	-	-	4	Montgomeryshire	-	4
Gloucestershire	-	-	4	Denbigh	-	1
Shropshire	-	-	3	Merionethshire	-	2
Carried up	-	-	31			50

tions to Sick Clubs, Friendly Societies, Building schemes, Burial Clubs, and the like. Of course the security of these savings, and the desirability of these investments, depend entirely on the soundness of the principles and the accuracy of the calculations on which these clubs and societies are based, and on the means they possess of preventing and detecting fraud among their officers. Defalcations are frequent among them, to the great distress of those who have trusted them, and to the great discouragement of provident habits among the poor. These defalcations are sometimes the result of deliberate villany, but oftener of a fallacy in the scale of their payments and allowances, which any competent actuary would have detected. Something has been done by parliament to remedy this evil; but notwithstanding, it is believed that a large proportion of the friendly societies in the kingdom—enrolled as well as unenrolled—would now be found insolvent, or in the way to become so, if their condition were closely scrutinised. Now an employer should consider it one of the chief duties imposed upon him, by his position and his education, to explain to his workpeople the principles on which all such associations should be founded, to examine the constitution and condition of all with which any of them are connected, and to point out to them which are sound and which are unsound—leaving them, of course, their inalienable right as freemen to adopt the unsound, if they will. By a little trouble taken in this matter, the employer might not only do much good among his dependants, but go far towards gaining their confidence; for here no sinister motive could be attributed to him.

Lastly, one of the most obvious, sacred, and important of the duties which a master owes to those whom he employs, is a careful and conscientious selection of those whom he places in authority over them. Hard-hearted

or immoral managers or overlookers may do more mischief and inflict more suffering in a month than the employer can countervail during his life. They come more closely into contact with the workmen; their influence over them is thus often both greater and more constant. The master, therefore, who in the appointment of this class of men, regards only their economical and intellectual, and in no wise their moral qualifications, is guilty of a very manifest and very serious dereliction of the obligations which his station imposes upon him.

A wide field of usefulness still remains to him in the establishment of schools, reading-rooms, baths, wash-houses, and the like, of the value of which it is unnecessary to speak here. Their importance has been long and widely discussed; and many examples of their successful existence might be pointed out. But we wish strongly to urge that, in all these schemes, the great employer of labour should bear in mind that his relation to his workpeople is passing, if not passed, from the feudal into the democratic stage; and therefore that his cue should be, not so much to establish, still less to enforce, all these desirable institutions, as to encourage and facilitate them. He should cultivate every wish for them, meet every demand for them half-way, and show his sense of their value; but he should not forestal the wish too much. If given, not gained, they are little esteemed. If given before wanted, half the good of them is thrown away. If bestowed on an unprepared, unaspiring, and unappreciating body of workmen, they not only take no root, and soon wither away, but they are like pearls cast before the feet of meaner animals — creating no gratitude towards the donor, and no respect for the gift. Moreover, in this case, they die out with the individual employer, having been indebted for their existence to his personal influence alone. These remarks are the fruit of experience, and doubtless

will find favour only with experienced readers; so we will fortify ourselves with a quotation from the wise and good man, whose suggestions we have already cited more than once.

“In all your projects for the good of others, beware lest your benevolence should have too much of a spirit of interference. Consider what it is you want to produce; not an outward passive conformity to your plans, but something vital, which shall generate the feelings and habits you long to see manifested. . . . How slowly are those great improvements matured, which our impatient nature might expect to have been effected at a single stroke! And can you think that it is left for you to drill men suddenly into your notions, or to produce moral ends by mere mechanical means? You will avoid much of this foolish spirit, if you are really unselfish in your purposes; if, in dealing with those whom you would benefit, you refer your operations to them as the centre, and not to yourself. . . . Consider how a wise father acts as regards interference. His anxiety will not be to drag his child along, undeviatingly, in the wake of his own experience, but rather to indue him with that knowledge of the chart and compass, and that habitual observation of the stars, which will enable the child himself to steer safely over the great waters. The same with an employer of labour; for instance, if he values independence of character and action in those whom he employs, he will be careful, in all his benevolent measures, to leave room for their energies to work. For what does he want to produce? Something vital, not something mechanical.”\*

Such are a few of the more obvious duties which the relation between employer and employed, even in its modern and democratic phase, imposes on the former; which, in fact, are grafted on that relation by the closer and more sacred tie of Christian “neighbourhood.” We have pointed them out but briefly, having been less anxious to descant upon obligations which have already been so ably and largely treated by others, than to call attention to the modified form which those obligations

\* Claims of Labour.

assume from the equalising tendencies of the present age, and to show how much that is rich, beautiful, and useful, may be superinduced upon that relation of "simple contract" which it is customary to represent as so meagre, so unsatisfactory, and so unchristian. We are, of course, far from meaning that the duties we have enumerated form the sum total of what the labourer may reasonably ask, or the employer conscientiously render. If the latter be duly impressed with the great principles we have endeavoured to elucidate; if he have fairly mastered the true nature of his position, as that, not of a patron who has legitimate right and power to guide, and who is therefore bound to govern and protect,—but of a wealthier and wiser equal, whose superiority entails upon him claims, in exact proportion as it gives him means of influence; if he have an earnest sense of the responsibility of talents, and of all the vast meaning involved in the answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?"—he will confine himself to no formal decalogue of "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not;" he will discover new duties every day springing up, like flowers, along his path; he will find the relation between himself and his workmen, which at first seemed so scanty and so barren, growing richer and more fruitful hour by hour; he will learn how much good may be done by casting aside all idea of keeping them in leading-strings, and by being content to watch and aid, rather than to urge and control; and what great results may flow from the exertions of the man who is content to sow the good seed, yet leave Time and Providence to ripen the assured harvest—who is able at once to labour, and to wait. In the vast establishments of modern industry, the mere existence of men penetrated with a sense of duty is of itself an immeasurable good; and no employer who views his position rightly, and comprehends its full significance, who can tread his



path steadfastly, and see its goal distinctly, can avoid dropping showers of seeds and blessings on his way. It is to a want of a true perception and thorough realisation of the nature of the position, that we may trace the sad impatience, the bitter disappointments, and the many failures—the wrecks and the skeletons—which strew the history of philanthropic effort;—and therefore it is that we have taken pains to place the matter in a light more correct, as we think, than that in which it is generally viewed.

Of the correlative obligations of the workman, and of the degree in which his employer's power to serve him must depend upon himself—upon his sense of fairness, his rationality, his unsuspicious docility—we have left ourselves no room to speak:—our sole anxiety has been, by a searching analysis, to place the relation itself on a proper footing. It may be, as some think, that the third stage, which, as we have shown, that relation has now reached, is not to be its permanent and final one, but that, with advancing intelligence and developed circumstances, the relation itself is destined to cease altogether, and merge in the wider one of association—that capitalists are ultimately to become their own workmen, and workmen their own employers. Time will show. Doubtless the future has great changes in store for us. Society, in its progress towards an ideal state, may have to undergo modifications, compared with which all previous ones will seem trifling and superficial: of one thing only can we feel secure—namely, that the loyal and punctual discharge of all the obligations arising out of existing social relations will best hallow, beautify, and elevate those relations, if they are destined to be permanent; and will best prepare a peaceful and beneficent advent for their successors, if, like so much that in its day seemed eternal, they, too, are doomed to pass away.

## SIR R. PEEL'S CHARACTER AND POLICY.\*

WITHIN one generation three statesmen have been suddenly called away in the zenith of their fame, and in the full maturity of their powers. All of them were followed to their graves by the sincerest sorrow of the nation; but the nature of the grief thus universally felt was modified in each case by the character of the individual, the position which he held, and the nature of the services which the country anticipated from him. When Sir Samuel Romilly fell beneath the overwhelming burden of a private calamity, the nation was appalled at the suddenness of the catastrophe, and mourned over the extinction of so bright a name. He had never held any very prominent public office, though the general estimation in which he was held designated him ultimately for the very highest. He had achieved little, because he was a reformer in a new path, and had to fight his way against the yet unshaken prejudices of generations, and the yet unbroken ranks of the veteran opponents of all change; but thoughtful men did honour to the wisdom and purity of his views, and there was steadily growing up among all classes of the community a profound conviction of his earnestness, sincerity, and

\* From the "Westminster Review."

1. *Life and Times of Sir Robert Peel.* By W. C. TAYLOR. London: 1848.

2. *Speeches of Sir Robert Peel.* (In course of publication). London: 1851.

3. *Political Life of Lord George Bentinck.* By B. DISRAELI. London: 1852.

4. *History of the Whig Administration.* By J. A. ROEBUCK. London: 1852.

superiority to all selfish and party aims, and a deep and hearty reverence for the stern, grave, Roman-like virtue which distinguished him from nearly all his contemporaries. It was universally felt, that if he had lived he would have risen high and have done much; and that, whether he lived or died, the mere existence of so lofty and spotless a character reflected lustre on the country where he shone, and raised the standard by which public men were judged. It was felt, that although England might not suffer greatly by the loss of his services, it would at least be the less bright and glorious for his departure; and hence he was mourned for with an unusually unselfish and single-minded grief.—The regret of the nation at Canning's untimely death was at once more bitter and more mixed. A brilliant "spirit was eclipsed;" the voice that had so long charmed us was henceforth to be silent; the intellect that had served the country so long and so gallantly could serve her no more. All this was sad enough, but there was something beyond this. There was the feeling that the curtain had fallen before the drama was played out, when its direction had just been indicated, but while the issue could as yet be only dimly guessed. There was a general impression that, with his acceptance of the Foreign Office in 1822, a new era and a noble line of policy had commenced for England, and that, with his accession to the premiership in 1827, the ultimate triumph of that policy was secured; that the flippancy and insolence which had made him so many enemies in early life, were about to be atoned for by conscientious principle and eminent services;—that years and experience had matured his wisdom, while sobering his temper and strengthening his powers;—that the wit and genius which, while he was the ill-yoked colleague of Pitt, Sidmouth, and Castlereagh, had too often been employed to adorn narrowness, to hide incapacity, and

to justify oppression, would now be consecrated to the cause of freedom and of progress ;—and that the many errors of his inconsiderate youth would be nobly redeemed by the dignified labours of his ripened age. With one memorable and painful exception, his former antagonists were yearning to forgive the past, and to form the most sanguine visions for the future ; and the dismay which his elevation spread among the tyrants abroad, was the measure of the joy with which it was hailed by the Liberals at home. When, therefore, he died, after only four months' tenure of his lofty station, the universal cry was, that the good cause had lost its best soldier and its brightest hope. Men could scarcely forbear from murmuring that so brief a sceptre had been granted to one who meant so well and could have done so much ; and to all the friends of human progress, the announcement of his death was like thick darkness settling down upon their cherished anticipations. But another feeling mixed with those of sorrow and despondency—a feeling of bitter indignation. Right or wrong, it was believed that Canning had fallen a victim, not to natural maladies, nor yet to the fatigues of his position, but to the rancorous animosity of former associates and eternal foes. It was believed that he had been *hunted to death*, with a deliberate malignity, which, to one so acutely sensitive as himself, could scarcely have been otherwise than fatal. There was much truth in this. The old aristocrats hated him as a plebeian, though Nature's self had unmistakably stamped him as a noble ; the exclusives loathed him as an “adventurer ;” the Tories abhorred him as an innovator ; powerful and well-born rivals could not forgive him for the genius which had enabled him to climb over their heads ; some could not forget his past sins ; others could not endure his present virtues ;—and all combined to mete out to him, in overwhelming measure, the injustice, the sarcasm,

the biting taunt, the merciless invective, with which, in days long gone by, he had been wont to encounter his antagonists. There was something of righteous retribution in the treatment which must have made it doubly difficult to bear:—what wonder that he sunk under the assault? But the British nation, which instinctively revolts from any flagrant want of generosity, and will not endure that a man should be punished for attempting, however tardily, to recover and do right,—have done full justice to his memory, and have never heartily pardoned his assailants.

The sudden and untimely death of Sir Robert Peel gave a severe shock to the feelings of the country, occasioned deeper and wider regret, a more painful sense of irreparable loss, and of uneasiness and apprehension for the future, than any similar event since the death of Canning. The loss of Mr. Huskisson was a great one; but the country felt that there were others on whom his mantle had fallen who were competent to follow in his steps, and to replace him at the council board. Lord Grey, when he died, had long retired from office; he was as full of years as of honours, and the nation had nothing to anticipate from his future exertions; thus the general sentiment at his departure was one of simple sympathy and calm regret. Lord Spencer, too, popular and respected as he had once been, belonged rather to the past than to the present; and though regretted, he was no longer wanted. But long as the public career of Sir R. Peel had been, no one regarded it as closed; great as were the services which he had rendered to his country, there were yet many more which it looked to receiving at his hands. The book was still open; though no longer in the early prime, or the unbroken vigour of life, he was in that full maturity of wisdom with which age and experience seldom fail to crown an existence as energetically spent



as his had been; he filled a larger space in the eyes of England and the world than any other statesman of his day and generation; and to his tried skill, his proved patriotism, his sedate and sober views, and his unmatched administrative capacity, the nation looked with confidence and hope as the sheet-anchor of its safety. We believe there never was a statesman in this country on whose trained and experienced powers, on whose adequacy to any emergency and any trial, both friend and foe, coadjutor and antagonist, rested with such a sense of security and reliance. As long as the Duke of Wellington remained in the full possession of his powers, the country felt that it need not fear the result of any war; as long as Sir R. Peel was spared to us, the country felt that it need not lose heart at any domestic convulsion or civil crisis. Hence the universal feeling of dismay which attended the announcement of his unexpected death in 1849. It was not that we could not yet boast of many men of great administrative ability, some statesmen of profound and comprehensive views, and several rising politicians who may, in the future, vindicate their claim to high renown; but Sir R. Peel left behind him no one whom the nation esteemed his equal — no one who, naturally and by universal acclamation, stepped into his vacant place, as the acknowledged inheritor of his influence and his fame — no one whom, in case of danger or emergency, England could unanimously and instinctively place at the head of affairs.

The time has perhaps scarcely yet come for a full and impartial estimate of the character and career of this eminent man. The shock of his death is still too recent, the memory of his signal services in the great struggle of the day too fresh in the mind of the nation, and the possibility of crises, in which we shall incline to turn to him with unavailing longing, too imminent,



to make it likely that we can avoid erring on the side of lenity to his failings, and undue admiration of his capacities and his achievements. His own papers and correspondence, which we trust will shortly be given to the world, are still also a sealed book ; and we may err in our estimate of some transactions for want of the light which the publication of these documents could throw over them. But on the other hand, many impressions are now fresh in our minds which fade away year by year. We have always been conscientious opponents of the great party with which he acted during four-fifths of his career ; and we feel wholly free from the bias which connection with any political school can scarcely fail to create. We are conscious of no feelings or prepossessions which should prevent us from trying Sir Robert Peel by the fairest standard which morality and philosophy can set up ; and if we should be thought, wherever doubt is possible, to incline to the more charitable explanation, it is because we from our hearts believe that, in estimating public men in England, the more charitable our judgment is, the more likely is it to be just.

It is interesting to observe what a vast majority of our most eminent statesmen, during the last century, have been commoners, and how many even of these have sprung out of the middle class, strictly so called. William Pitt, "the great commoner," was the second son of a country gentleman, who had acquired parliamentary importance by the purchase of close boroughs. Edmund Burke was the son of an Irish attorney. The father of Charles James Fox was the second son of a country baronet of no very enviable reputation, in Walpole's time. Canning's father was a briefless barrister, whose family cut him off with an annuity of 150*l.*, and whose widow was afterwards obliged to

support herself by going upon the stage. His friend Huskisson was the son of a country gentleman in Staffordshire, of very restricted means. The origin of Sir Robert Peel was humbler than that of any, his father having begun life as a manufacturer in a small way, in Lancashire, and having rapidly risen to enormous wealth. These recollections are encouraging enough; they seem to indicate that, whatever may be the fate or condition of our aristocratic families, the under strata of society are fully adequate to furnish a constant supply of suitable candidates for the public service, and that there is nothing in our national system which need prevent such men from rising to their proper station. It is worthy of note, that none of those we have named owed their elevation to the legal profession, which, in all times, has been a ready ladder by which plebeian ambition could attain the highest posts.

Sir Robert Peel's father early destined him for public life, and was resolved that he should enjoy every advantage for the race he was to run. No pains was spared in his education. At Harrow he was noted for steady diligence, but not for brilliant parts. At Oxford he took a double-first. He entered parliament in 1809; was made Under Secretary for the Colonies in 1811; Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1812; Home Secretary in 1822; Prime Minister in 1834; and again in 1841. His parliamentary life lasted just forty years; and during the whole of it, whether in or out of office, he was prominently before the public eye.

His public life exactly coincides with the eventful period during which an entire change has been wrought in the tone and spirit of our national policy, foreign and domestic — a change which he, partly intentionally, partly unconsciously, contributed much to bring about. When he appeared upon the stage, old ideas and old principles were predominant, triumphant, and almost

unshaken. When, at the age of sixty-one, the curtain closed upon his career, everything had become new. When he entered public life, we were in the midst of the most desperate war England ever had to wage, undertaken on behalf of an exiled royal family, and ended by replacing them upon a throne from which they had already been once driven by popular insurrection, and from which they were soon to be ignominiously expelled a second time. Before three summers have passed over his grave, we find statesmen of every party — Lord Derby, Lord John Russell, and Lord Palmerston — vying with each other in proclaiming as the guiding principle of the foreign policy of Britain, the acknowledgment of the indisputable right of every nation to choose its own rulers and its own form of government. When Sir Robert Peel became Chief Secretary for Ireland at the age of twenty-four, the penal laws against the Catholics were in full force, and seemingly stereotyped in our statute book. One of his last measures during his last term of office was to endow in perpetuity the Catholic College of Maynooth. When he began life, the Test and Corporation Acts were unrepealed, and the Dissenters were fettered and irritated by numberless injustices; by the passing of the Dissenters Chapels Bill before his death he helped to sweep the last of them away. In 1809, the old glories of rotten boroughs and purchaseable constituencies were untouched and unbreathed upon; the middle classes and the great towns to which England owed so much of her wealth and energy, were almost without a voice in the legislature; and the party which had held power, by a sort of prescriptive right, for a quarter of a century, was pledged to resist any change in the representation. In 1849, Parliamentary Reform had been matter of history for seventeen years, and rumours of a new and further innovation were be-

ginning to be heard without either alarm or incredulity. In 1809 the most restrictive and protective commercial policy was not only established, but its wisdom and justice were not even questioned. In 1849, Sir Robert Peel went to his grave amid the blessings of millions, for having swept it away for ever. Finally, when he entered political life, the old Tory party seemed as rooted in Downing Street as the oak of the forest, and the Whigs to have their permanent and natural place in opposition. When he finally quitted office, the old Tory party was broken up and obsolete, and even their modified and advanced successors maintained an unequal contest with the Liberals. Everything that the men with whom he was first connected most dreaded and deprecated had been done; everything that they pronounced impossible had come to pass. Parliament had been reformed; Catholics had been emancipated; Dissenters had been raised to a footing of equality; Unitarians and Quakers sat in St. Stephens; republics had been unhesitatingly acknowledged; the corn laws and the sugar duties had been ruthlessly abolished. An entirely new spirit has been infused into our policy — the spirit of freedom and progress. If Sir Robert Peel's first chief, Mr. Perceval, could return to life, he would find himself in a world in which he could recognise nothing, and in which he would be shocked at everything; and it is hard to say whether England or her quondam premier would be most scandalised at each other's mutually strange and ghastly apparition. And all this mighty change has taken place during the career, and partly by the instrumentality, of a single statesman.

Sir Robert Peel's accession to the cabinet in 1822 in place of Lord Sidmouth, synchronising as it did with Canning's return to the management of our foreign affairs, coincides with the commencement of a purer

morality and a higher tone of character among public men. Since that time there has been little jobbing, and scarcely a single transaction that could be called disgraceful among English ministers. Speculation and actual corruption, or rather corruptibility, have, it is true, never been the characteristics of our political personages since the time of Walpole and Pelham; but up to the beginning of this century, jobbing of every kind among public men was common, flagrant, and shameless. Even in the days of Pitt, places, pensions, and sinecures, were lavished with the most unblushing profusion to gratify official avarice, to reward private friendship, or to purchase parliamentary support. Ministers provided for their families and relations out of the public purse with as little scruple as bishops do now; and indeed considered it as part of the emoluments of office to be able to do so. The Prime Minister (Perceval, for example,) pocketed two or three comfortable sinecures himself, as a matter of course. Public opinion and the public press exercised only a very lax and inadequate watchfulness over the public purse. The trial of Lord Melville, First Lord of the Admiralty, for malversation, is familiar to every one. The same laxity of official morality prevailed in Perceval's time, and, indeed, with little improvement, till Lord Sidmouth's retirement. A glance over the pension and sinecure list of those days is painfully instructive. In 1810 the number of sinecures was 242, and the emoluments attached to them 279,486*l.* a year: in 1834, these were reduced to 97,800*l.*, and they do not now exceed 17,000*l.* In the reign of George III. the pension list considerably exceeded 200,000*l.* a year; and even as late as 1810, it reached 145,000*l.*: it is now reduced to 75,000*l.*; and of this sum not more than 1200*l.* can be granted in any one year. The committee on official salaries, which sat during 1850, brought out in strong relief the contrast



between the present and the past in all points connected with the purity of our administrative departments ; and it is impossible to read the evidence in detail without being strongly impressed with the high morality and spotless integrity which now distinguish our public men. All the acuteness of our financial reformers on that occasion could not drag to light a single job, and scarcely a single abuse, while it placed in the very brightness of noon-day the official probity and honour of the existing race of statesmen.

But this is far from being the only improvement that has taken place among them. Their notions of patriotism have become loftier and more just ; their allegiance to party more modified and discriminating ; their devotion to their country more paramount and religious. They are more conscientiously obedient to their own convictions, and less submissive to the trammels of regimental discipline. Statesmen are beginning to feel not merely that they are playing a noble game, pregnant with the most thrilling interest, and involving the mightiest stakes—but that they are called upon to guide a glorious vessel, freighted with richer fortunes than ever Cæsar carried with him, through fluctuating shoals, and sunken rocks, and eddying whirlpools, and terrific tempests ; that on their skill, their watchfulness, their courage, their purity, their abnegation of all selfish aims, depend the destinies of the greatest nation that ever stood in the vanguard of civilisation and freedom ; that they must not only steer their course with a steadfast purpose and a single eye, and keep their hands clean, their light burning, and their conscience clear,—but that even personal reputation and the pride of consistency must be cast aside, if need be, when the country can be best served by their immolation. They must act

“ As ever in their Great Taskmaster's eye,”



and must find in these lofty views of a statesman's honour and requirements the only counteraction that can be found to the mean struggles, the wearisome details, the unworthy motives, the low and little interests with which they are brought daily into contact.

The key to all the enigmas, all the imputed guilt, all the peculiar usefulness to his country of Peel's career, is to be sought in the original contrast between his character and his position. Of a cautious and observing temper, and conscientiously desirous to do the best for his country whenever that best became clear to him, he was the son of a Tory of the narrowest and stiffest sort, whose mind had been enlarged by no culture and whom no experience perhaps could have taught; and he was at once enlisted into the ranks and served under the orders of men who rarely doubted, who never inquired, into whose minds no suspicion ever entered that what was best for their party might possibly not be best for the nation also, to whom every article in their own creed appeared unquestionably right, and every article in their opponent's creed as unquestionably wrong. In those days—in all times perhaps to a greater or less extent—the young men whose birth or connections or parental position destined them for a political career, entered public life, as our young clergymen enter the church now, with the thirty-nine articles of their faith put, ready cut and dried, into their hands—unexamined, unquestioned, often unread; their opinions, like their lands, were a portion of their patrimony; and they no more suspected the soundness of the one than the value of the other. As at Oxford and Cambridge men are educated for the clerical profession not by a searching critical and philosophical investigation into the basis of the creed they are to teach—not by an acquisition of all those branches of knowledge which alone could entitle them to form an independent opinion

on its merits—not by a judicial hearing of all that can be said against it as well as for it—but simply and solely by a memorial mastery of the items which compose it, and a competent acquaintance with the stock arguments which the learning and ingenuity of all times have discovered *in its favour*;—so were the young politicians of Peel's day prepared for the arena into which they were cast and the strife they were to wage—not by a careful study of political science in the works of the masters who have thrown light upon it *from all sides*—not by a profound acquaintance with the wisdom which is learnt from history—not by mastering the difficult problems of political and social economy—not by a conscientious appreciation of the truth that lay in the views of their antagonists and a sedulous elimination of the error that had crept into their own,—but merely by habitually seeing and hearing only one side of every question—by imbibing every prejudice, reflecting every passion, learning to echo with thoughtless confidence every watch-cry of the party for whose service they were designed. And as our young clergymen begin their theological studies—as far as those studies consist in the first great duty of ascertaining and following the truth—only after they have assumed the livery and sworn the oath of fealty and of faith, only when the fatal document has been signed and the investiture of slavery received, only when their doom is irrevocably fixed, and when earnest and single-minded inquiry incurs the awful hazard of landing them in doctrines which they have vowed, and were enlisted, to combat and destroy, and—if they be honest men—of casting them forth upon the world with the blighted prospects and the damaged character of renegades and apostates, or at best with the stigma of instability and inconsequence for ever clinging to their name;—so did the young statesmen of Peel's

epoch begin their political education when they had already taken their seats in parliament, returned by a particular interest, and on the faith of definite or understood professions: they began to examine and reflect on political questions when such deliberation was especially difficult, because in the midst of an exasperating contest, and especially dangerous because, if sincere, it was as likely as not to lead them to desertion and damnation. Hence, with the members of both professions, it has been the too common practice—natural and, from human weakness, scarcely avoidable and only gently to be condemned—to shut their eyes and fight blindly on, endeavouring to believe themselves conscientious so long as they were consistent and satisfied, so long as they used the old weapons, marched under the old banner, and stood by the old friends.

Great as is the public evil, and severe the individual misery, arising from the source just indicated, few who reflect how large a portion of the opinions of all of us is *hereditary*, will be disposed to deal severely either with the sinners or the sufferers. We naturally adopt the views of those whom we have loved and honoured from our infancy, and it is right we should. We naturally imagine that those who have been wise and faithful in all that regards ourselves, are equally wise and faithful in matters that lie beyond the scope of our present knowledge. We naturally believe that doctrines against which we have never heard anything said, are doctrines against which nothing can be said; and we find it hard to conceive, that what we have always heard treated as axioms of science, are among the most disputable matters of opinion. Not only our positive creed, but our tone and turn of mind, are framed instinctively after the model of those among whom we live; and thus it becomes a matter of the greatest difficulty both to enter into and do justice to the views of

others when presented to us, or to divest ourselves even of what may hereafter be proved erroneous in our own. No man can start in life, whether in a political, religious, or literary career, with his mind a *carte blanche*: few can wait to take up a definite position till they have thoroughly mastered and impartially weighed all sides of the great questions with which they have to deal. In public affairs, especially, action is an essential requisite to a complete understanding of them; it is only by being involved in them that you can see deeply into them; it is only in parliament that the education of a member of parliament can be completed. It is not till you hear views diametrically opposed to those you have inherited, stated by an opponent whose powers you cannot but recognise as superior to your own, and whose sincerity of conviction you cannot doubt, that you perceive, with amazement and dismay, how doubtful appears much that you had always considered as self-evident, and how plausible seems much that you had been taught to regard as monstrous and indefensible. An abyss seems to open beneath your feet: the solid ground is no longer stable; and all the landmarks of your mind are shaken or removed. Much change, many inconsistencies, some vacillation even, should be forgiven to all who serve the country as senators or statesmen, especially to those who enter on her service young.

Few men have drawn more largely than Sir Robert Peel on this wise indulgence, and few have had a stronger claim to have it extended to them in overflowing measure. It was his irreparable calamity to have been thrown by nature into a false position. His birth was his misfortune—a sort of original sin which clung to him through life. Born in the very centre of the Tory camp, in a period when Toryism was an aggressive principle, an intolerant dogma, a fanatic sentiment,

—in a period, too, when party passions were virulent and unmeasured to a degree of which we, in our times, have had only one brief specimen, and when Toryism was rampant, dominant, and narrow, in a manner which amazes and shocks us as we read the contemporary annals of those days,—Sir Robert Peel was yet endowed with native qualities which could not fail to place him at once in antagonism with his position, for he had a solid intellect, an honest conscience, an innate sense of justice and humanity, an acute observation, and a keen spirit of inquiry, which were incompatible with Toryism as it then existed,—mental and moral endowments which, from the moment he entered public life, placed him among the most liberal and enlightened of his own party, which speedily created a sort of secret uneasiness among them, and which clearly showed that he was destined either to drag them on with him, or to march on before them and without them. To this originally false position may be traced nearly all those obliquities and inconsistencies which have laid Sir Robert Peel's career so open to hostile criticism. Created of the stuff out of which moderate Liberals are made, but born into the ranks in which only rigid Tories could be found, his whole course was a sort of perpetual protest against the accident of his birth—an inevitable and perplexing struggle between his character and his circumstances, his conscience and his colleagues, his allegiance to principle and his allegiance to party. As his mind ripened and his experience increased, he was compelled, time after time, to recognise the error of the views which he had formerly maintained, and which his colleagues still adhered to; and like all progressive statesmen, he was frequently obliged to act on his old opinions, while those opinions were in process of transition, and to defend courses, the policy of which he had begun to suspect, but had not yet definitely



decided to abandon. Hence, if we look at his strange and incongruous career in a severe and hostile spirit, we see a minister who through life was incessantly abandoning doctrines he had long pertinaciously upheld, and carrying out systems of policy he had long denounced as dangerous and unsound—deserting and betraying his own party, and usurping the victory of his opponents. Looking at the same career from a more generous, a more philosophic, and, as we deem it, a juster point of view, we see a statesman born in intolerant times, and cast among a despotic and narrow-minded party, whose path through history may be traced by the *exuviae* he has left lying by the wayside, by the garments he has outgrown and flung away, by the shackles from which he has emancipated himself, by the errors which he has abandoned and redeemed.

The political progress of a country, with free institutions and a parliamentary government like that of England, is brought about by the perpetual struggle between two great parties, each of whom is the representative—often imperfect and unworthy enough—of distinct principles and modes of thought. The predominant idea and feeling of one party, is reverence for ancestral wisdom and attachment to a glorious past, beautiful in itself, but unduly gilded by a credulous and loving fancy:—the predominant sentiment of the other is aspiration after a better future. The efforts of the first are directed to preserve and consolidate what is left to us: those of the second, to achieve whatever is not yet attained. From their contests and compromises—contests confined within fixed limits, and conducted according to certain understood rules of war—compromises by which one party foregoes something to obtain an earlier victory, and the other sacrifices something to avert an utter defeat—results the national advance



towards a more humane, just, and comprehensive policy. The progress bears the stamp of the mode in which it is wrought out; it is slow, fragmentary, and fitful; but it is secure against retrogression, and it never overleaps itself. It exhibits none of those mournful, disappointing, and alarming spectacles with which the political struggles of the Continent abound. The party of the past, however mighty in possession, and however doggedly entrenched, is never able *wholly* to resist. The party of the future, however elastic with the energy, and buoyant with the hopes of youth, is never powerful enough to carry *all* before it. Those who pull forward and those who hold back, never fairly break asunder. All move together — against the wish of the latter — but far more slowly than the former would desire. Neither party entirely separates from the other, as in Germany. Neither party entirely overpowers the other, as in France.

Now this peculiar character of our progress, to which must be attributed both its durability and its safety, is due to a class of men to whom England owes more than to almost any of her sons, and to whom she is in general most scandalously ungrateful — viz., the Liberals in the Conservative camp, and the Conservatives in the Liberal camp. Unappreciated by the country — misrepresented by the press — misconstrued and mistrusted by their friends — suspected of meditated desertion — reproached with virtual treason — suffering the hard but invariable fate of those who are wide among the narrow, comprehensive amid the *bornés*, moderate among the violent, sober among the drunken — condemned to combat against their brethren, and to fraternise with their antagonists — they lead a life of pain and mortification, and not unfrequently sink under the load of unmerited obloquy, which their unusual, and therefore unintelligible, conduct brings upon them. The Liberals call them timid

and lukewarm Laodiceans; the Tories call them crotchety, impracticable, and fastidious. They do the hardest duty of the conscientious patriot, and are rewarded by the bitterest abuse that could be lavished on the common enemy. Lord Falkland was one of these men; Burke was another; Lord Grey, in a measure, was a man of the same stamp. These were all Conservatives among the friends of progress. Sir Robert Peel was a Liberal, cast among the friends of stationariness and reaction. In the march of the nation towards securer prosperity, sounder principles, and a wiser policy, he occupied for more than a quarter of a century that post of pain, calumny, and mortification—but of inestimable importance also—the *Leader of the Laggards*,—the man who chained together the onward movement and the backward drag—the Reformers and the Tories; who saved the latter from being left utterly behind—stranded, useless, and obsolete; and checked the too rapid advance of the former, by acting as the bond which compelled them to draw the reluctant conservatism of society along with them.

Peel's naturally just and liberal sentiments showed themselves in various small indications early in life, and excited some uneasy misgivings in the minds of his own bigoted colleagues. As early as 1812, when he was Irish Secretary, and when such notions were rare among his party, he expressed in parliament his anxiety for the extension of education among the Irish peasantry; and in 1824, when he was Home Secretary, he gave great offence to the Ultra-Protestants of his party by expressing himself thus:—"In the education of the poor in Ireland, two great rules ought now to be observed: first to unite, as far as possible, without violence to individual feelings, the children of Protestants and Catholics under one common system of education; and secondly, in so doing, studiously and honestly to

discard all idea of making proselytes. The Society whose exertions had been referred to [the Kildare Street Society] seemed to him to have erred in the latter respect." When he came into office, after the Reform Bill, as is well known, he steadily supported and firmly administered the system of mixed education introduced by the Whigs. As soon as he entered the Cabinet in 1822 he directed his immediate attention to the amelioration of our prison discipline and the mitigation of the scandalous severity of the criminal code, and in June of that year announced that government were preparing measures on these important topics. In March, 1826, he introduced two valuable Bills, for "the Improvement and Consolidation of the Criminal Laws," in a speech of singular modesty, discretion, and good feeling; but most unhappily he omitted to do justice to the harder labours of his predecessors in the same field; and those who remembered the persevering but unavailing efforts of Sir Samuel Romilly, and Sir James Mackintosh, for similar objects, at a time when humanity was rarer and less reputable, could not forgive his apparently ungenerous silence. They ever afterwards accused him of "gathering where he had not strewed, and reaping where he had not sown." Three years later, when the colleague of the Duke of Wellington, he introduced one of the greatest administrative improvements of our time—the new police force in place of the old incapable nocturnal watchmen, and the inefficient and scanty parish constables. And throughout the whole of this term of office he showed the most earnest spirit of economy and retrenchment, such as extorted the applause even of the Opposition. "They," says Mr. Roebuck (vol. i. p. 164.), "who were most conversant with the finances of the country considered that economy was carried further than had been yet known, and that a spirit of fairness and complete freedom from jobbing

or nepotism pervaded every branch of the administration." Mr. Hume, who was undoubtedly the most earnest advocate for retrenchment in the House, frankly acknowledged that "the Chancellor of the Exchequer had gone as far as he imagined he could go with safety on the present occasion." Mr. Baring and Mr Huskisson, both great authorities on such subjects, confessed that "the Chancellor of the Exchequer had gone to the utmost verge of reduction possible in the present state of the country, without the substitution of other taxes." And generally the selection of the taxes to be taken off was deemed judicious — and made solely with a view to public and not partial interests. — We have enumerated briefly these points in Sir Robert Peel's career, to prove that the liberalism which he showed so increasingly in later life was no external element superinduced upon his character by the change in his political position and party connections, but one which had been always present, though long kept under restraint by unsympathising colleagues and the native caution of his temperament.

Many of Sir Robert Peel's qualities and defects as a minister lay upon the surface, and might be comprehended at a glance. He was not a man of genius; he was not a man of consistent action; he had nothing of the deep-seated science of the philosophic statesman; and till the last four or five years of his life, he displayed nothing of the high historic grandeur of the patriot-hero. But he had other qualifications and endowments, which, if less grand and rare, were probably more suited to the age in which his lot was cast, and the part which he was called upon to play. In the first place, he was, pre-eminently, and above all things, *prudent*. Cautious by temperament, moderate by taste, his instinctive preference was always for a middle course: he disliked rashness, and he shrank from risk; the responsibilities of office were always for him a sobering and retarding

weight: and those who watched his course and studied his character, early perceived that he was not a leader who would ever push matters to an extreme, or put to hazard the tranquillity or the welfare of the country by too pertinacious and protracted an adherence to personal sentiments or old opinions, or by too desperate a fidelity to prejudice or party. He might be too tardy sometimes in yielding; but no one doubted that he would yield, if it became obviously wise and necessary to do so. He carried prudence almost to the height of genius, and early earned for himself the most serviceable of all reputations in this country — that of being a “safe man.”

Connected with this leading characteristic was another of the same order. He was uniformly *decorous*, and had a high sense of dignity and propriety. He was a worshipper of the *το πρεπον* both in manners and in conduct. He scarcely ever offended against either the conventional or the essential *bienséances* of society. He never made enemies, as Canning did, by ill-timed levity or heartless jokes. His speeches and those of his brilliant colleague, on the occasion of the Manchester massacre, place in strong contrast the distinctive peculiarities of the two men. Both took the same side, and nearly the same line of defence; but the tone of the one was insolent and unfeeling, that of the other dignified and judicial. The language of Canning on that occasion was never forgotten or forgiven: after a few years no one remembered that Peel had ever had the misfortune to defend so bad a cause. Peel too had, even at the beginning of his career, too great a respect for his own character, to allow himself to be dragged through the dirt by his superior colleagues. Even when his position obliged him to excuse what was indefensible, he contrived to allow his inward disapproval to pierce through his apology. He was fortunate enough, or skilful enough, to



be out of office during the memorable prosecution of the Queen; and the only time that he was compelled to speak upon that disgraceful business, he expressed a grave regret that a suitable palace had not been provided for her Majesty, and that her name had been excluded from the liturgy.

One requisite for an English statesman—perhaps at the present day the most indispensable of all—in which the Whigs generally have been singularly deficient—Peel possessed in unusual measure, at least in the latter portion of his life—viz., a quick and instinctive perception of public opinion. He had a keen and sensitive ear to the voice of the nation, and an almost unerring tact in distinguishing the language of its real leaders and movers from that of mere noisy and unimportant declaimers. He seems first to have acquired this faculty in 1829, or at least to have awakened to a sense of its vast importance; and the memorable two years during which the Reform Bill was under discussion—a time in which his political education advanced with marvellous rapidity—brought it almost to perfection. This peculiar tact Lord John Russell never has been able to learn. And in truth it is not easy to acquire it, or to say how it is to be acquired. It is an instinct rather than an attainment; and an aristocracy which does not belong to the people, or live much with them, or sympathise promptly in their feelings, seldom possesses it. Public opinion expresses itself in many ways; its various organs hold fluctuating language, and give forth conflicting oracles; the powerful classes are often silent; the uninfluential classes are generally clamorous. If novel and important measures are proposed, those who concur are commonly satisfied with a quiet and stately nod of approbation: those who object are loud and vehement in their opposition. How, amid these contradictory perplexities, is a statesman to ascertain the



sentiments of the intelligent and effective portion of the nation? If he goes to the members of the House of Commons, he cannot overlook the fact that they represent only the feelings of their constituents, or, it may be, of their nominators; and that the unrepresented, or the unequally represented, portion of the community forms a most essential element in the popular opinion. At best, members cannot be relied on to speak more than the sentiments of the country at the time of their election; and they, like the minister, are students of the same problem, and puzzled with the same conflicting clamours. If he looks to petitions, he is inquiring in a most deceptive quarter; for we all know how even "monster" petitions can be "got up." If he looks to public meetings, he cannot fail to be aware that their importance and significance depend entirely on the character and position of the people who take a part in them; that there are meetings of many thousands in the open air, which it would be folly to listen to, and mere weakness to respect; and meetings of a few scores "in an upper chamber," indicative of an influence and of sentiments which it would be absolute insanity to disregard. Lastly, if he looks to the press, how is he to know among what class of readers each newspaper circulates? How can he tell whether it is really expressing their sentiments, or merely seeking to lead them to its own. How can he ascertain whether on any particular topic, such as Lord Palmerston or the Poor Law, the "Times" is actually the organ of public opinion, or only that of private malignity, or idiosyncratic crotchets? How is he to distinguish how many of its readers read it with disgust and disagreement, like himself, and how many with acquiescence and credulity? Where the press is not unanimous, or nearly so—where it is widely divided in its judgments, as is almost constantly the case—how is the statesman to apportion to

each organ its actual influence, or the number and weight of its clients, so as to gather from the whole something like an accurate estimate of the national expression? It is abundantly obvious that he must be left very much to the guidance of his own sagacity; and with this sagacity Sir Robert Peel was endowed in a most unusual measure. After 1832, he scarcely ever made the mistake—which his antagonists were making every day—of not knowing whose quiet voice to listen to, and whose clamorous demands to disregard.

Sir Robert Peel was not certainly a statesman of the highest order which we can picture to ourselves for the government of a great state; but it is by no means so clear that he was not the most finished specimen of that peculiar class of statesmen who alone can find a place in a representative constitution such as ours, in which the democratic element so largely preponderates. He had no far-seeing plans for the preservation and regeneration of the empire, which he kept in view through all vicissitudes, and to which, amid all his various terms of office, he perseveringly made everything conduce. His policy was based upon no profound or well-digested system, upon no philosophic principle to which he could adhere through good report and ill report, and keep ever before him as the guide and pole-star of his career. To praise like this he has no claim. He often erred as to what ought to be done, and he often discovered it deplorably too late. But whatever he had to do he did well. He had the rare merit, among our public characters, of being a thorough *man of business*. He was a statesman of consummate administrative ability. His measures were always concocted with the most deliberate and patient skill. His budgets were models of clearness and compactness. As soon as discussion began, it was made apparent that he had weighed every difficulty and foreseen every objection.

He was always master of his subject. The result was that his proposals scarcely ever underwent any alteration in their passage through parliament; they might be accepted or rejected; they were never mutilated or transmogrified. Those of his opponents, on the other hand, even when in the plenitude of their power, and commanding such a majority as had backed scarce any minister since the days of Pitt, were so clipped, curtailed, modified, and added to, that when they came forth from the ordeal, the parents could scarcely recognise their own offspring. Peel's measures were finished laws before they were brought forward: the Whig proposals were seldom more than the raw materials of legislation thrown down on the floor of the House of Commons, to be wrought by that manufactory into the completed fabric. Hence grew a general conviction, that though the Whigs were often right, yet that they could not be trusted to embody their own ideas in suitable and judicious enactments; — that Peel might be often mistaken, yet that he was always *up to his work*. He was often on the wrong tack, but he always sailed well.

Peel's whole heart was in the public service. He seemed actually to love toil. He was indefatigable and most conscientious in the performance of his official duties. The veriest drudge of office was not more constant at his desk. The most plodding committee-man could not rival him in the persevering regularity of his attendance in the House of Commons. During his short but most memorable ministry in 1835, he went through an amount of labour that was almost incredible. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer as well as First Lord of the Treasury. He had scarcely a single colleague competent to afford him any efficient aid. He had to struggle against a hostile House of Commons, and a mistrusting country. The fight was not of his choosing, and he knew from the first that it was a hope-

less one. But he contended gallantly to the last — toiling incessantly from seven o'clock in the morning till long past midnight — and when at last he resigned, he had risen fifty per cent. in public estimation.

We now come to the great peculiarity of Sir Robert Peel's career — that which has brought upon him the accusation of being a traitor, a turn-coat, a man of infirm purpose, and of variable and inconstant views — *want of consistency*. On three several occasions he recanted all his previous professions — adopted the opinions he had hitherto strenuously opposed — and carried out the policy which he had been accustomed to denounce as mistaken and dangerous. He did so on the question of a metallic basis for the currency; he did so on the question of Catholic Emancipation; he did so on the question of the Corn Laws. All were topics of first-rate magnitude — all involved great and long-contested principles — on all his views underwent an entire and radical change. For this change he was bitterly reproached with treachery and tergiversation by those who did not see the truth as soon as he did, and by those who have not seen it yet; he was ungenerously taunted by those who were wise enough or happy enough to see it earlier; and made the subject of depreciation and grave rebuke by those who appear to hold that if a statesman cannot discern the right path at the beginning of his career, he ought at least to persevere in the wrong one to the end.

Now this charge of "inconsistency" and tergiversation has so long been popularly regarded as the heaviest and most damaging that can be brought against the character of politicians, that it is well worth while to spend a few moments in inquiring *how* it comes to be so estimated, and how much of justice may be awarded to this estimate, when weighed in the balance of

unprejudiced reason. When a statesman draws himself proudly up, and declares amid the prolonged cheering of his audience, "*I never abandoned my party; I never changed my opinions; I never voted in favour of measures I had spent the best years of my life in opposing,*" he imagines that he is putting forth the most irrefragable claim to public confidence and admiration. When he seeks the most fatal and irritating weapon with which to wound or discredit an antagonist, he rakes up from buried volumes of Hansard the expression of sentiments and doctrines widely at variance with those now professed, and taunts him with sitting side by side with colleagues who were his foes in years gone by; and the arrow generally strikes home; and though none are invulnerable by it, none seem able to refrain from using it, and none can receive it without suffering and shrinking. Why is this? Why should the charge be felt so painfully?

The explanation is an historical one. Our morality and our sensibility on this subject have descended to us from those days when parliament was not an assembly in which the interests of the nation were discussed by the representatives of the nation with the object of ascertaining its wishes and promoting its welfare, but an arena in which trained gladiators contended for the mastery—a field of battle in which two marshalled hosts contended for the victory; days when senators were not men selected by the people to investigate, deliberate, and legislate for the exigencies and the progress of the country according to the best light which science and study could bring to shine upon them—but soldiers enlisted for an avowed cause, marching under a known banner, owing allegiance and obedience to an acknowledged chief. Hence the morality of parliament *then* was the morality of *military* life; and in the military code desertion is the most heinous of all crimes. Again,



in those times from which our present party morality has been inherited — the times of Walpole, and Pelham, and the first Pitt — tergiversation and change of party were nearly always traceable, or supposed to be traceable, to some mean or sinister motive. It was generally accompanied and explained by the acceptance of a peerage, a pension, or a place.

From these two circumstances, it naturally resulted that political inconstancy was regarded less as indicative of a mental process of conviction, than as involving personal honour; the accusation was a flagrant insult; the fact was fatal to a statesman's popularity and the stainless purity of his reputation. But why the same conventional rule of judgment should be maintained *now*, when no senator is ever influenced in his changes by the promise of a bribe or the hope of a place, and scarcely ever by low ambition or personal pique, and when members of parliament are not party combatants, but deliberating legislators, it is not easy to perceive. Still less reasonable does it seem when we reflect that no statesman of the present generation, and scarcely any of the last, can point to a career of unswerving consistency. Lord Eldon, indeed, was a model of unchanging constancy; but it is impossible to regard this as a virtue in him, for we know that it was the result of a bigoted temper, and a narrow mind, and was about the most mischievous of his many noxious qualities.

Had all his colleagues been like him, we should, ere now, have seen a revolution as complete and unsparing as that of France. "What a consistent career has Lord Eldon's been," wrote a contemporary of his in 1829, "the ever active principle of evil in our political world! In the history of the universe no man has the praise of having effected as much good for his fellow-creatures as Lord Eldon has thwarted." The consistent career of the late Lord Grey does, indeed, present many



points for admiration ; but we must remember that Lord Grey started in life with opinions far in advance of his day and generation, many of which were wholly inapplicable and out of place then ; and there was more than one occasion both in early and in later life, when his fidelity to party led him into language and conduct deplorably inconsiderate, unworthy, and unjust. Among living statesmen who can point to a consistent career, in the ordinary sense of the term ? Is it Lord Derby, who was at one time the fiercest assailant, and at another the subordinate minister of Peel ; at one time the vigorous reformer, at another time the resolute stickler for the intact existence of the Irish Church ? Is it Sir James Graham, the Radical of early days, who in 1831, stood in the very van of the Whig party, as the colleague of Lord Durham and Lord Grey ; who, in 1835, was a devoted adherent of the seceding Lord Stanley ; and in 1845, a colleague of Sir Robert Peel, and an opponent of Lord Stanley ? Is it Lord Palmerston, who has held office successively under the Duke of Portland, Mr. Perceval, Lord Liverpool, Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Canning, Lord Grey, and Lord John Russell ?

Is it Mr. Gladstone, either in what he has done or in what he has contemplated ? Is it Mr. Disraeli, the quondam Radical, the present leader of the reactionary rump ? Finally, is it even Lord John Russell, who made the "appropriation clause" a *sine qua non* in 1835, and passed a bill without it in 1838 ; who opposed the motion for an inquiry into the operation of the Corn Laws in 1839 ; who proposed a fixed duty of eight shillings in 1841, and declared for total repeal in 1845 ? We do not mean to intimate that all these statesmen were not conscientious, and may not even have been right in their various changes of party and modifications of opinion ; but assuredly none of them can lay claim to the attribute of immutability.

There is a wise, and there is an unwise, species of political constancy. There is a narrow and mechanical, and there is a large and comprehensive, view of the same great principle of rectitude. There is a steadiness of opinion and of purpose which imbues itself with noble sentiments, and places great objects ever before it; which, having studied deliberately the best interests of the country and decided the direction in which it ought to steer, keeps those interests and that goal in view through all bewildering storms, and through every intervening cloud; which in each emergency selects that policy best suited, during that emergency, for nearing the appointed haven; which in every danger chooses and follows the pilot who best understands that peculiar portion of the chart of destiny over which the vessel of the state is at that moment steering; and which knows how to preserve an essential, if not a superficial, consistency by varying its means and its course to secure the unity of its end. And there is a stubbornness of will, an unbending *rectilinearness* of march, like that of the Norwegian Leming, which cannot comprehend that perils which press from one quarter are not to be met by the same weapons and the same attitude which is appropriate against those which menace from an opposite direction; which would apply the same panacea to every social malady, and to every condition of the patient—to the state of excitement and the state of collapse; which cannot conceive that altered national circumstances may demand altered national policy; which, in the difficult navigation of public life, ascertains its position and calculates its course, not by fixed landmarks, but by floating fragments—not by objects eternal in the heavens, but by objects moving upon earth; and which deludes itself into a belief that it is nobly pursuing one consistent purpose, so long as it is surrounded by the same familiar

faces, and uttering the old ancestral shibboleth of party — though the circumstances which made its companions patriots, and its war-cry a just and noble reality, have long since been reversed. There is a perseverance which is “instant in season;” there is a pertinacity which is instant “out of season;” and there is a national purblindness which confounds the two qualities — so diametrically distinct — in one common admiration. Finally, there is a consistency — the boast of the shallow and the vain, but often of the conscientious too — which forms its opinions, collects its maxims, and adopts its party according to the best light it has, and then shuts the door of the mind against all disturbing knowledge and all bewildering and novel illumination, — which petrifies into impenetrability or congeals into a frozen fog. And there is an open and earnest convincibility, which, aware that the utmost wisdom it can attain at the outset of its career is at best fragmentary and imperfect, is constantly storing up new facts, mastering new discoveries, deliberating on new arguments, profiting by old errors, digesting the lessons of past experience; which feels that the first duty of a high position is to abjure prejudice, and give to the country the full benefit of every added information, of every successful experiment, of every elaborated science. Men of this stamp of mind are marked out for misrepresentation and for taunt; they are made the butt of every Tory blockhead to whom so unegotistical a conscience, so lofty and unconventional a standard of public duty, are things utterly incomprehensible; but they are the men who most truly serve, and most often save, their country, and the country generally appreciates them better than either parliament or party.

The truth is that in a country of free institutions, like England, of which progress is the law and life, that

sort of inconsistency which is implied in political *conversion* must be not only an admitted fact, but a recognised prerogative; and in an age of transition like that in which we live, these conversions must be necessarily frequent and rapid. Were it otherwise—were conversion a forbidden thing—the strife of parties would become a war of extermination; the nation could advance in her course of enlarging and enlightening policy only by the death or political extinction of the conservative statesmen. Not only would our progress be more tardy, but it would be more fitful, spasmodic, and dangerous. There would be no change till by process of election or of death the obstructions were reduced to an absolute and permanent minority, and then the change would be sudden and immense. We should lose all the advantage and all the safety which now arises from the gradual modifications which take place in the views of the most reflective statesmen of all parties, and by the ceaseless and often almost imperceptible passing over of influential politicians from one camp to the other: those who, yielding to the moulding spirit of the age, and the influx of new impressions, desert the ranks of the Tories for those of the Reformers, carrying with them many of their early associations with a venerated past, and much of the native conservatism of their temperament: those, on the other hand, who having achieved the great reforms on which they had set their hearts, or swayed by the insensible influence of increasing years, begin to fear the too rapid encroachments of the democratic element, and therefore join the ranks of the retarders, carrying with them to the quarters of their former antagonists many of their popular sympathies, and some faint embers of their old enthusiasm for reform. A progress which draws the old nation along with it is not only securer, but far more *complete* than one which results

from the defeat of one party and the predominance of another; and for this it is essential that the *liberty of conversion* should be upheld as one of the indisputable privileges of our public men. But, like all other liberties, it must be surrounded with such guarantees, limits, and conditions as shall prevent it from degenerating into licence.

These conditions are three:—the public have a right to require from a statesman who abandons his former opinions, or party, that his changes shall not be vacillations, but advances; that they shall be fairly and candidly avowed as soon as decided; and that they should not, if possible, be in the direction of his personal interest; not so much so at least as to give the slightest fair opening for ascribing them to sinister motives. Let us try Sir Robert Peel's conversions by this standard.

In the first place, though a perpetually changing, he was never a vacillating statesman. His course was essentially *progressive*. Every step he took was a step forward. He never "tried back." From the Peel of 1812 to the Peel of 1829, the advance is rapid and remarkable: from the Peel of 1829 to the Peel of 1849, the improvement is so wonderful that individual identity is almost lost. He began life as the underling of Lord Sidmouth—the shallowest, narrowest, most *borné*, and most benighted of the old Tory crew. He ended life leading the vanguard of the most liberal of the matured statesmen of the age. He began life the advocate of the civil disqualifications of Catholics and Dissenters. He ended it the advocate of complete religious freedom. He was born a monopolist; he passed through many phases of gradual emancipation, and at last died a free-trader. Unlike Lord Stanley, who started from the front rank of the Reformers, and has now, in his course of retrogression, reached almost the



rear rank of the Obstructives, — Sir Robert Peel started in the race with every disadvantage, clogged with every weight and fetter which could impede his progress; but he cast them one by one aside, and advanced, with slow and timid, but not oscillating footsteps, to complete emancipation from early prejudices and from old connections.

Further, in all his changes, as soon as he saw his way clearly, he stood to his colours manfully. "When he was ambiguous, unsatisfactory, reserved, and tortuous," says Mr. Disraeli, "it was that he was perplexed, and did not see his way." When once he had fixed upon his line, he never attempted to shirk the consequences or corollaries of his new policy. He not only accepted, cheerfully and candidly, the deliberate decisions of the legislature, even when opposed to his own opinions, as settled and accomplished facts (as in the case of the Reform Bill); but when his ripening convictions, or the wisdom which time and experience brought with them, compelled him to retreat from a position, to retract a policy, or avow a change, he never attempted to deny the fact, or extenuate the magnitude of that change — he was never guilty of the common subterfuge of little minds — of endeavouring, by petty and underhand manœuvres, to counteract the effect of the course he was publicly obliged to take. He did not do things by halves, or in a niggard and reluctant spirit. When, in 1819, a careful inquiry in a committee of the House of Commons produced an entire change of opinion on the subject of our metallic currency, the bill which he then introduced for the resumption of cash payments was a complete and thorough measure, and formed the basis for all his subsequent action on the same topic in 1834 and 1844. When in 1829 he felt obliged, in direct contravention of all his previous policy, to concede emancipation to the Catholics, the



measure he brought forward was a complete and generous one. There were no needless reservations of the high places of the state; there was no attempt to save appearances by the enactment of fancied securities; there were no evasive clauses, to undo by a side-wind the manifest and declared intention of the measure. It was as graceful a surrender at discretion as could well be made; and not only did he subsequently show no wish to undo his work, or to escape from its consequences, but in his steady support of the Irish national education system, in his augmentation and establishment of the Maynooth Grant, and in his erection of the "Godless Colleges," he uniformly proved himself prepared and resolved to act in the spirit of his own great measure. The Reform Bill was carried against his most strenuous opposition; but having been carried, after deliberate discussion, by the pronounced will of the nation, Sir Robert Peel struck no back-handed blow at its efficiency. And when, in 1846, he at length perceived the wisdom and necessity of a resignation of the corn laws, he proposed, not the half-way house of a fixed duty, but total abolition—while admitting that in so doing he laid himself open to the deepest obloquy and the most unsparing criticism. And ever afterwards he supported ministers manfully, whenever this measure, or any of its consequences, was in question. When, therefore, a statesman's changes have thus invariably been slowly and cautiously made, honestly avowed, resolutely and unflinchingly carried out, and when, above all, they have always been *in one direction*—not backwards and forwards, but invariably onward—what more can be said in defence of inconsistency, if inconsistency in a statesman be allowable at all?

Secondly, Sir Robert Peel always fulfilled the other conditions we have specified as required to sanction change of opinion and to redeem it from moral reprobation.

tion. In many of the most important measures of his life, he adopted the views and carried out the plans of his opponents; but (save on one occasion, which has been already noticed) he was always careful to render honour where honour was due—to give the credit of the triumph of the principles he had tardily embraced to those who had early maintained them. Thus in 1811, just after his entrance into public life, and probably before he had time to give any consideration to the subject, he adopted the views of his ignorant and bigoted old father on the Bank Restriction Act, and voted against the celebrated bullion resolutions of Francis Horner. But when, in 1819, in compliance with the order of a select committee of the House of Commons, he introduced his measure for the resumption of cash payments, we find him saying: “I am ready to avow without shame or remorse that my views on this subject were materially different when I voted against the resolutions brought forward in 1811 by Mr. Horner, as chairman of the bullion committee; but having gone into this inquiry determined to dismiss all former impressions, to apply to the subject my unprejudiced attention, and to adopt every inference that authentic information or mature reflection could offer to my mind—I now conceive the principles laid down by Mr. Horner to represent the true nature and laws of our monetary system; and it is without shame or repentance that I thus bear testimony to the superior sagacity of that distinguished statesman.” In 1829, in bringing forward his memorable bill for Catholic emancipation, Sir Robert Peel spoke as follows:—“The credit of this measure belongs to others, not to me. It belongs to Fox, to Grattan, to Plunket, to the gentlemen opposite (the Whigs), and to an illustrious friend of mine (Mr. Canning), who is now no more. By their efforts, in spite of my opposition, it has proved victorious.” Again, in

1846, on the night when he took leave of power after the final carrying of the repeal of the corn-laws, the crown and consummation of a long series of measures in the direction of free trade, he spoke thus:—"The name which ought to be associated with the success of these measures, is not the name of the noble lord opposite, nor is it mine. The name which ought to be and will be, associated with those measures, is that of one, who acting, as I believe, from pure and disinterested motives, has, with untiring energy, made appeals to our reason, and has enforced those appeals with an eloquence the more to be admired because it was unaffected and unadorned—the name which ought chiefly to be associated with the success of these measures is the name of Richard Cobden."

Sir Robert Peel never attempted to disguise or diminish the fact of his change of opinion. When decided and complete, it was always manfully avowed as soon as circumstances would permit. The tergiversation which has brought upon him the severest animadversion was that which took place on the Catholic question. In the passionate language of the time, it was designated by no gentler name than that of treachery. It is worth while, both for the sake of the individual and for the elucidation of political morality, to go a little closer into the facts of this remarkable question. In the first place, it is alleged that to change at all on such a topic reflects no honour on his sagacity: for this was no new question, with respect to which want of knowledge or of previous consideration could be pleaded. The subject was one specially connected with his earliest official situation: it had always been a prominent one: he had been in the habit of discussing it for seventeen years. Every argument in favour of the *principle* of Catholic emancipation had been repeatedly urged upon him, and been repeatedly repudiated by him. Every danger

likely to arise from its refusal had been pointed out in the clearest manner, and with wearisome reiteration, and had been by him denied, undervalued, or despised. How came the truth to dawn upon him so slowly, and to be admitted so reluctantly? And how can the long persistence and the tardy recantation be reconciled with any character for statesmanship?

Little can be said to weaken the force of these representations, except that the whole history of the question shows the peculiar character of the man's mind. It was his nature to yield to conviction slowly and reluctantly. He was *born* on the wrong side, and it cost him seventeen years of warfare to get right. That, with his hereditary notions as to the sanctity and authority of the English Church, he should shrink from throwing open the doors of the constitution to the hereditary and irreconcilable enemies of that church, does not surprise us. That, knowing the Irish Catholics as he did, he should dread and deprecate the introduction of such men into the British legislature, surprises us still less. The conduct of the "Irish Brigade" in recent years has shown us that he was not wholly wrong. But that a man naturally so just and equitable should not have shrunk from denying to so large and respectable a body of his fellow-subjects the full rights of citizenship, does, we confess, appear incongruous. And that so keen an observer and so cool a reasoner should have so long continued blind to the danger, increasing every year, arising from the internecine strife, is quite inexplicable, and clearly shows that at this period of his life he read "the signs of the times" far less truly and promptly than he afterwards learnt to do. But it must be observed that he himself placed the cause of his yielding in 1829 what he had till then opposed, upon its right footing. It was a change of *policy*, not a change of *opinion*. He held as strongly as ever his

conviction of the desirableness of Catholic exclusion. But it was no longer possible. *Circumstances had changed.* Through the organising and agitating powers of Mr. O'Connell, the danger of refusing had at length become greater than the danger of conceding,—*and therefore only did he yield.* He chose then, as he had chosen hitherto, that which he believed to be the least of two evils for his country. Catholic emancipation and civil war were both mischiefs to be dreaded and averted; but the latter was the worst mischief of the two. When the alternative was put thus clearly before him, he logically and inevitably gave way. “According to my heart and conscience,” said he, “I believe that the time is come when less danger is to be apprehended to the general interests of the empire, and to the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Protestant establishment, in attempting to adjust the Catholic question, than in allowing it to remain any longer in its present state. . . . Looking back upon the past, surveying the present, and forejudging the prospect of the future, again I declare that the time has at length arrived when this question must be adjusted. . . . I have for years attempted to maintain the exclusion of Roman Catholics from parliament and the high offices of the state. I do not think it was an unnatural or unreasonable struggle. I resign it in consequence of the conviction that it can no longer be advantageously maintained. . . . I yield, therefore, to a moral necessity which I cannot control, being unwilling to push resistance to a point which might endanger the establishments that I wish to defend.” In plain words, he saw that he was defeated, and therefore capitulated, to save useless bloodshed and a worse catastrophe. This was not the language of a great or a foreseeing statesman; but it was the language of a prudent and conscientious minister, and of an honest man.



"But," it is said, "if such were his views, he should not have proposed Catholic emancipation at all. He should have resigned, and have left the settlement of that great question, with its satisfaction and its glory, to those whose opinions regarding it were thus proved to have been right." Undoubtedly he would have consulted both his own feelings and his own fame by acting thus; and under ordinary circumstances this would have been the proper course to have pursued. But higher than mere personal considerations were here involved. Let us look into the details of the case: in them we believe we shall find his complete justification.

The state of affairs, as already stated, produced, towards the close of the year 1828, in the minds both of the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel, a strong conviction that the government of Ireland, on the old system, had become impossible, and that Catholic emancipation must be conceded, if they were not prepared to hazard the alternative of civil war. Having arrived at this conviction, the first point was of course to secure that a measure for this purpose *should be carried*; the second, *longo intervallo*, was that it should be carried by the proper parties. Fortunately, the publication of Lord Eldon's correspondence has thrown great light upon the ministerial difficulties at this crisis. Lord Eldon, who hated the Catholics like poison, was in constant communication with the King, and has described his state of mind in vivid colours. George IV., whose conscience had never in the course of sixty years withheld him from the indulgence of any bad passion or the commission of any agreeable crime, felt an insuperable objection, partly of mortified pride, partly of alarmed scruple, to conceding Catholic emancipation. He could not, however, turn a deaf ear to the representations of his ministers. He at length assented to their proposals.



Then he withdrew his assent. He played fast and loose with them; entreated them to forego their intentions; entreated them not to desert him; empowered Lord Eldon to see if he could not rescue him from them; kept them in doubt up to the last moment whether he would not break his pledged word, and by pronouncing the royal veto give the signal for civil war. These difficulties with the King ministers could not explain—could scarcely even hint at; and hence their explanations always seemed incomplete and unsatisfactory. The history of the case was this, as we know it now from authentic sources.\*

In August, 1828, after the close of the session, Sir Robert Peel wrote confidentially to the Duke of Wellington, explaining to him in the clearest manner the absolute necessity of at once settling this great question, which had now reached a position which made all government impossible, and concluding in this manly language:—

“I must at the same time express a very strong opinion, that it would not conduce to the satisfactory adjustment of the question, that the charge of it in the House of Commons should be committed to my hands.

“I put all personal feelings out of the question. They are, or ought to be, very subordinate considerations in matters of such moment; and I give the best proof that I disregard them, by avowing that I am quite ready to commit myself to the support of the principle of a measure of ample concession and relief, and to use every effort to promote the final arrangement of it.

“But my support will be more useful, if I give it with the cordiality with which it shall be given, *out of office*. Any authority which I may possess, as tending to reconcile the Protestants to the measure, would be increased by my retirement. I have been too deeply committed on the question—have ex-

\* “Lord Eldon’s Life and Correspondence.” Speech of Sir R. Peel in the House of Commons, Dec. 17. 1831.

pressed too strong an opinion with respect to it—too much jealousy and distrust of the Roman Catholics—too much apprehension as to the immediate and remote consequences of yielding to their claims—to make it advantageous to the King's service that I should be the individual to originate the measure."

From that period to the end of the year the ministers were occupied in endeavouring to obtain the consent and to fix the mind of the false and vacillating monarch. When this consent was finally obtained, and it became necessary to prepare for meeting parliament on the new footing, Sir Robert Peel, on the 12th of January, 1829, again wrote to the Duke, praying for permission to retire, stating, "that retirement from office was the only step he could take which would be at all satisfactory to his own feelings, and deprecating in the most earnest manner his being the person to bring forward the measure in the House of Commons." But in the mean time the difficulties of the Duke had been greatly increased by the announced hostility of the bench of bishops, and he intimated to Sir Robert Peel that he could not maintain his ground if he (Sir Robert Peel) persisted in resigning. "The earnest appeal, also, made to him by the King, not to shrink from proposing a measure which, as a minister, he advised the King to adopt, left him no alternative, consistent with honour and public duty, but to make the bitter sacrifice of every personal feeling, and himself to originate the measure of Roman Catholic Relief. Could he, when the King thus appealed to him—when the King referred to his own scruples, and uniform opposition to the measure in question—when he said, 'You advise this measure—you see no escape from it—you ask me to make the sacrifice of opinion and consistency—will not you make the same sacrifice?' What answer could he return to his sovereign but the one he did return? viz., that he would make that sacrifice, and would bear

his full share of the responsibility and unpopularity of the measure he advised."

The plain and brief truth of the case was this :—the safety of the country required that Catholic emancipation should be at once conceded—of this there was no doubt. The Whigs, no doubt, ought to have carried it,—but the King, it was well known, would not endure a Whig ministry, and the King was impracticable, testy, and prevaricating, and manageable by no one but the Duke. If the Duke had resigned, he would have thrown himself into the hands of the old Tories, emancipation would have been refused, and civil war and national retrogression and disgrace would have been the consequence. But the Duke's resignation would have been necessitated by Peel's retirement. As an honest and disinterested patriot, therefore, Sir Robert Peel, in our judgment, had no option but to act as he did act.

Considerable blame was thrown upon Sir Robert Peel at the time, on the ground of the apparent suddenness of his conversion. In 1828, it is said, he declared that his opinion as to the impolicy of concession remained unchanged, while at the beginning of 1829, he himself proposed concession. And, more than this, he allowed his brother and brother-in-law to deliver speeches at public meetings in various parts of the country, most violent and decided in their denunciations of Catholic emancipation at the very time when it appeared he had advised his sovereign to grant emancipation, and shortly before he himself proposed it to parliament. With regard to the latter charge, which brought upon him much odium and the bitter indignation of his relatives, it will suffice to observe that not only could he not, consistently with his oath and duty as a cabinet minister, have given them any intimation of the change under consideration,—but that from the vacillation and unreliableness of the King, ministers

themselves felt no security *till the speech from the throne was actually delivered*, that they would be allowed to bring forward their proposals, and that infinite mischief and embarrassment would have resulted from permitting their intention to leak out before the monarch was publicly committed on the subject. With regard to the suddenness of Sir Robert Peel's conversion, we know now that it was rather apparent than real; and of sudden ministerial changes in general a more honourable explanation can be given than is commonly supposed. Men in public life, and more especially ministers in actual office, when new facts, deeper reflection, stronger arguments, or altered positions, come to shake their previous opinions and produce an incipient change, are placed in a situation of singular difficulty. They can seldom retire or lie by till the inchoate operation is complete; their position often calls upon them for constant action and perpetual speech; in the meantime, they are obliged to conceal from the public the mental process which has just commenced, so long as it is imperfect and uncertain; they must speak and act in accordance with their past, not with their future selves; if they speak, they must speak in conformity with the old opinions over which doubt is gradually creeping; if they act, they must act on the principles which they are beginning to abandon, not on those which they are beginning, but only beginning, to adopt. This is a hard and painful position; yet it is one which duty to their colleagues and their country not unfrequently compels public men to endure. Like other men, if they are honest, inquiring, and open-minded, they must inevitably find modification after modification coming over their opinions in the course of their career, as knowledge ripens, as facts develop, as wisdom matures. Yet for a leading senator to be silent, or for a chief minister to retire, every time he felt the first warning symptoms of

such an alteration, would be simply impracticable in actual life, though no doubt the most comfortable course for his own feelings, and the safest for his reputation. Thus he is in a manner obliged, by the requirements of his position, to continue making the best defence he can for his old course and his old principles till his *suspicion* of their unsoundness has risen into a clear and settled *conviction*; and when, having arrived at this point, he suddenly and conscientiously avows his change, there is unquestionably, *primâ facie*, a very dark case against him. We believe we have here indicated the secret of that course of conduct which brought down so much obloquy upon Sir Robert Peel on two memorable occasions in 1829 and in 1846. We do not affirm that it presents a full justification: but we do hold that it affords a fair and not discreditable explanation of many apparently sudden or too rapid changes in the opinions and measures of public men.

In the third place, a statesman's changes, we have said, ought never to be so manifestly in the direction of his personal advantage as to leave any decent ground for attributing them, either wholly or in part, to sinister or interested motives. On this head, Sir Robert Peel's tergiversations stand free from the slightest suspicion. Whatever might have been said in the angry surprise of the moment by a deserted and disappointed party, everyone now feels not only that all his changes were conscientious, but that all of them were made at the most bitter sacrifice of personal feeling. His first inconsistency—on the currency question, in 1811—brought him into immediate and very unpleasant collision with his father, who even spoke before him in the debate; and it is understood that the old gentleman scarcely ever heartily forgave his son for his change of opinion, either on this occasion or in 1829. Few men, indeed, ever made greater sacrifices than Sir Robert Peel

to his views of public duty ; for he deliberately sacrificed to them — what to minds as ambitious and as sensitive as his, is far dearer than place, or power, or popular applause and admiration — the attachment of his party, the good opinion of his personal friends. In 1829, he incurred — knowingly and manfully, though with acknowledged pain and reluctance — the reproaches and indignation of a great party, the fury of those bigots who had long regarded him as their safest and most presentable champion, the rupture of many private ties, the blame of many dear connections, and the representation of the University of Oxford, to which he had long clung with honourable pride, and which Canning had so ardently desired ; and what, perhaps, to a proud man was worst of all, the humiliation of avowing an ignominious defeat, and the mistake and short-sightedness of years. “ The tone of his observations,” observes Mr. Roebuck, “ proved how acutely he felt the suffering of the fiery ordeal to which the indignation of his former friends had subjected him, how his mind still lingered about the objects of his former solicitude, and with what pain he divested himself of the character of the great Protestant leader.”

“ Allusion has been made,” he said, indignantly, “ to the sacrifice of the emoluments of office, which, it is insinuated, ought to have been preferred to the course I have adopted. Good God ! I cannot argue with the man who can place the sacrifice of office or emolument in competition with the severe, the painful sacrifice I have made — a sacrifice which it seems to be supposed I have consented to in order to retain my office. . . . Perhaps (he concluded) I am not so sanguine as others in my expectations of the future ; but I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that I fully believe the adjustment of the question in the manner proposed, will give better and stronger securities to the Protestant interest and the Protestant establishment than any other that the present state of things admits of, and will avert evils and dangers impending and immediate. What



motive, I ask, can I have for the expression of these opinions, but the honest conviction of their truth? . . . I well know I might have taken a more popular and selfish course. I might have held language much more acceptable to the friends with whom I have long acted and to the constituents whom I have lately lost. ‘His ego gratiora dictu alia esse scio; sed me vera pro gratis loqui, et si meum ingenium non moneret, necessitas cogit. Vellem equidem vobis placere; sed multo malo vos salvos esse.’”

What it must have cost Sir Robert Peel, and what it did cost him, in pride, in affection, in repute, to break loose from his party in 1846, and propose the repeal of the corn laws, we can now fully estimate.\* The deser-

\* Mr. Disraeli, in his “Life of Lord George Bentinck,” gives a graphic sketch of the memorable night when the Protectionists revenged themselves on their leader by voting with the Whigs on the Irish Coercion Bill, and so ejecting him from office. It was the evening when the repeal of the Corn Laws had finally passed the House of Lords:—

“At length, about half past one o’clock, the galleries were cleared, the division called, and the question put. . . . More than one hundred Protectionist members adhered to the minister; more than eighty avoided the division; nearly the same number followed Lord George Bentinck. But it was not merely their numbers that attracted the anxious observation of the Treasury bench, as the Protectionists passed in defile before the Minister to the hostile lobby. *It was impossible he could have marked them without emotion—the flower of that great party which had been so proud to follow one who had been so proud to lead them.* They were men, to gain whose hearts, and the hearts of their fathers, had been the aim and the exultation of his life. They had extended to him an unlimited confidence, and an admiration without stint; they had stood by him in the darkest hour, and had borne him from the depths of political despair to the proudest of living positions. Right or wrong, they were men of honour, breeding, and refinement, of high and generous character, and of great weight and station in the country, which they had ever placed at his disposal. They had been not only his followers, but his friends; had joined in the same pastimes, drank from the same cup, and in the pleasantness of private life had often forgotten together the cares and strife of politics.

“He must have felt something of all this, while the Manners, the

tion of many with whom he had long acted — the rage of the country gentlemen whom he had disappointed — the bitter indignation of those whom he dragged over the grave of their pledges and their prejudices to support his new policy — the merciless sarcasms, the unsparing imputations of premeditated treachery, nightly cast at him by the impotent fury of the deceived, and the deep malignity of the baffled — altogether formed a combination of painful and formidable obstacles, which would have deterred from such a course any man who loved his country less, or valued his reputation and his comfort more. But he faced all with a grave and sorrowful fortitude, which has not been without its reward. The *nation* saw and appreciated the earnest and unselfish sincerity of the man; did full justice to the honesty of his purpose, and the difficult firmness of his resolution, and in the end placed him on a pinnacle of popularity achieved by no statesman since Lord Grey. Never has it been the fate of a statesman to do his duty to his country in the face of so many difficulties — difficulties, it is true, the main portion of which were created by his own antecedents — and at the cost of so complete a surrender of all that statesmen hold most dear. In the course of thirty years, he changed every opinion, violated every pledge, broke up every party, disappointed every prophecy, deserted every colleague

Somersets, the Bentincks, the Lowthers, and the Lennoxes, passed before him. And those country gentlemen — those ‘gentlemen of England’ — of whom but five years ago this very same building was ringing with his pride of being the leader — if his heart were hardened to Sir Charles Burrell, Sir William Jolliffe, Sir Charles Knightly, Sir John Trollope, Sir Edward Kerrison, Sir John Tyrrell — he surely must have felt a pang when his eye rested on Sir John Yarde Buller, his choice and pattern country gentleman, whom he had himself selected and invited but six years back to move a vote of want of confidence in the Whig government, in order, against the feeling of the court, to instal Sir. R. Peel in their stead.” — P. 300.

whom he could not draw along with him ; yet, in spite of all, at the time of his death he stood in public estimation and respect the unquestioned chief, *longo intervallo*, of all the statesmen of the day. And why was this?—but because it was clear to all that sincere conviction, and conscientious, unselfish devotion to his country's service, were throughout the actuating principles of his conduct—were at the bottom of every changed opinion, of every broken pledge, of every scattered combination, of every severed friendship, of every disappointed hope. It occurs to many public men to sacrifice place, power, and friends to their principles and their faith : it was reserved to Sir Robert Peel to sacrifice to them his reputation—and this, not once, but time after time,—and yet to find it, like the widow's cruse, undiminished by the daily waste.

Of all Sir Robert Peel's conversions, his conversion to free trade and the repeal of the corn laws is the one which brought upon him the greatest obloquy and the heaviest charges, but we think with little justice. If, indeed, when he took office at the head of the Conservative party, in 1841, after ousting the Whigs—who, in their hour of danger and despair, had begun to tamper with the protection hitherto afforded to the agricultural and the colonial interests—he had already discerned the necessity, and made up his mind to the wisdom of a surrender, and yet led his party on to the attack, and assumed power in the name, and for the defence, of the old party,—then no language can be found severe enough to condemn such black and premeditated treachery. But there is not the slightest ground for believing this to have been the case. When, after the general election of 1841, he was summoned to take office by the large majority of a parliament elected under the combined influence of a general conviction of Whig incapacity and mismanagement—aided by the

alarm created among the agriculturists by their proposal of a fixed duty, and among the West Indians by their attempt to reduce the differential duties on slave sugar — he found the country in a condition calling both for immediate action to rescue it from misery and depression, and for a sincere and searching study of the causes which had plunged it into such adversity. The finances were deplorably dilapidated. The deficit was annual, and annually increasing; and the Whigs had tried in vain to cure it. The trade of the country was languishing, manufacturers were failing, many mills were closed, bread and meat were scanty and dear, want of employment and want of food were driving many to despair, and goading others into violence. Altogether, it was a gloomy period, the suffering and despondency of which are even now fresh and painful in our memory. It was one of those epochs which make all men earnest, and cause many to think and question who never thought or questioned before. Sir Robert Peel met parliament in the autumn, passed the necessary routine measures for the service of the country, and then steadily refused to give any intimation of the plans by which he proposed to meet the alarming state of matters, till he had had the five months of the recess for careful deliberation. Those months were spent by himself and his colleague, Sir James Graham, in anxious investigation and reflection. Few men are aware how effectually, in all worthy and honourable minds, the awful responsibilities of office during a time of national distress, crush and drive away all selfish and personal considerations; how they tear away the veil from the flimsy arguments which sufficed to answer an objection or silence an opponent; how they shrivel into nothing the claims of consistency, the prejudices of connection, the pride of reputation; and how they *compel* the most sincere and laborious efforts to arrive at truth. The impression

made upon the two leading ministers by that dreadful time never faded from their minds. Those who knew them then saw an unwonted gravity upon their faces. Those who knew them afterwards heard them say that no party or political considerations would induce them to risk the recurrence of such a period of suffering and gloom. It was the remembrance of 1842 that shaped their course in 1846; they saw a similar period approaching, and they dared not, and could not, meet it with *any* restriction on a starving nation's supply of food.

Sir R. Peel met parliament in 1842, with bold and statesmanlike proposals: — He saw that it was necessary to restore the finances, to relieve and unfetter industry, and to increase the supply of food for the people. So he imposed a property tax to enable him to modify a prohibitive and oppressive tariff; he greatly reduced the duties on the raw materials of manufactures, and he admitted foreign cattle and meat at moderate rates of duty. Further than this he would not go; *because further than this he did not see his way*. His new corn law was scarcely an improvement on the old one; and he was aware of this himself. On that subject his opinions, though shaken, were still undecided. *He did not see his way*; and his language showed this. Those who reproached him with ignorance and cowardice for not repealing the corn laws then, and those who reproached him with treachery and tergiversation for repealing them four years later, alike showed that they had not studied his career, and did not understand the peculiar character of his mind. He was, as a statesman exactly what the English are as a nation. They are, in spirit, essentially Conservative. They instinctively venerate what is old, dread what is novel, mistrust what is untried. They are ever unwilling to make a change till unmistakeable expediency or necessity forces it upon

them. They hold by precedent and custom till the position in which these retain them has become no longer tenable or safe. They hate rash experiments, but they love substantial justice. Hence, during the greater part of his life, Sir Robert Peel was a man after their own heart. He was pre-eminently a *tentative*, not a scientific, statesman. He had nothing of the political philosopher about him: he never formed a theory, and then followed it out systematically to its consequences; he always *felt his way*. He felt his way in criminal law reform; he felt his way in the concession of equal institutions to Ireland; he felt his way on the currency question; he felt his way in his financial measures; he felt his way in his liberal commercial policy. His first steps towards free-trade, in 1842, were made in doubt and trembling: it was obvious that he had no thorough confidence in the *principles* of the free-traders, and that he still thought there was much weight in the reasonings and the fears of their antagonists, but he perceived that the effect might be serviceable, and it was desirable that the experiment should be tried; and it was not till he saw how buoyantly the commerce of the country sprang forward under the timid and tentative relief which he had given, showing that at least he had done no harm and made no mistake, — that he began to see his way more clearly, and to announce his opinions more courageously, and with fewer reservations and misgivings. Had bad harvests, instead of good ones, followed his first tamperings with the old protective tariff, and the distress of the country been exacerbated instead of being relieved, we believe he would have concluded that he had been wrong, and that the further alterations of 1843, and the systematic revision of 1845, would have been indefinitely postponed.

In the same way he proceeded with the corn laws. No one could see his countenance and hear his speech



when, after six months of anxious reflection, he proposed his new scale of duties in 1842, without being convinced that he had begun to feel thoroughly doubtful of his ground:—the fearful distresses of his countrymen had compelled him to look into the subject more closely than he had ever done before, and to listen with more candour and attention to the reasonings of his opponents. The consequence was, that his mind became utterly unsettled; he had to propose a law at a time when his old views had been greatly shaken, but when the antagonistic views of the free-traders had not yet wrought full conviction: hence he defended his measure by arguments wholly unworthy of an intellect like his, and for three years insisted on giving it a fair trial. But during all this period, as was evident from his altered and hesitating language, his mind was gradually ripening for the final change: it was impossible for him, charged as he was with the destinies of England, to sit night after night in the House of Commons, listening to the lucid expositions, the crushing logic, of the small but indefatigable band of the champions of commercial freedom, without finding first, doubt, then admiration and surprise, then conviction, successively creeping over him. We well remember, as he sat silent after one of the calm, clear, irrefutable speeches of Mr. Cobden (regarding the effect of the corn laws on grazing and dairy farmers), which made an unwonted impression on the House,—the dismayed country gentlemen began to whisper anxiously from the back benches: “This will never do! Why don’t Peel get up and answer him?” Sir Robert Peel turned half round and muttered in a low voice: “Those may answer him who can.”

When his conversion was thus almost completed, came the memorable and terrible summer of 1845—incessant rain, a damaged and defective harvest, and the universal potato-rot—and the work was done. Peel

felt that he dared not encounter another period of distress and scarcity with the corn laws still unrepealed : he saw starvation in prospect for Ireland, and possibly for England also ; and he recognised the impossibility of maintaining *any* impediments to the most unlimited supply of foreign food. The more he thought, the more he listened, the more he observed,—the clearer became his vision, and the more resolute his purpose. At the beginning of November he proposed to throw open the ports ; but his colleagues were by no means unanimous, and he felt it was not a step to be taken with divided councils. Later in the month, Lord Morpeth joined the league : on the 22nd, Lord John Russell wrote his celebrated letter to the electors of London : he, too, like his great rival, was a convert to the pressure of the times and the arguments of the leaguers. A week after, Sir R. Peel resigned, after recommending the Queen to send for Lord John Russell, and placing in her Majesty's hands a written promise to assist his rival, by every means in his power, in effecting the now necessary settlement of this great question. The issue is well known : Lord John Russell could not form a ministry, and Sir R. Peel again took office with all his colleagues, except Lord Wharncliffe, who died, and Lord Stanley, whose prejudices were too stubborn to yield to facts, and whose heart was not yet touched by the prospective sufferings of his fellow-countrymen. He carried the repeal of the corn laws in the session of 1846, after a hard contest, and the most savage and bitter personal attacks, and then, according to a tacit understanding, gracefully laid down his power, and retired for ever from official life.

That a tentative and gradually progressive policy like his, does not indicate the possession of the highest qualities of statesmanship, we readily concede. The merit of the prophetic mind that sees far into the future

belongs not to Sir R. Peel. Few politicians ever read the present better, or the future less. He was clear-sighted, rather than far-sighted. "His life was one perpetual education," says Mr. Disraeli. "He was not a rapid learner," observes Mr. Roebuck, "but he was continually improving. He was ever ready to listen to the exposition of new ideas."—The truth is, as Mr. Disraeli perceived, Sir R. Peel was not an *original* mind: he drew his inspiration from others. He was not of that order of great men who early embrace vast objects and prolific principles, inoculate the country with them, and educate the country up to them through long years of effort, obloquy, and misconstruction. He was not even of those who say, with Artevelde, —

"I will not wait upon necessity,  
And leave myself no choice of vantage ground;  
But rather meet the times while still I may,  
And mould and fashion them as best I can."

He scarcely ever anticipated the verdict of the country; he was never too early; often too late. But when we reflect how great a change has of late years come over the political action of the country; how completely the general rules, and many even of the smaller details, of our policy are now decided by public opinion out of doors\*; how entirely both ministers and parliament

\* Mr. Disraeli, indeed, conceives that much of this change lies at the door of Sir Robert Peel. "No minister," he says, "ever diminished the power of government in this country so much as this eminent man. No one ever strained the constitution so much. He was the unconscious parent of political agitation. He literally forced the people out of doors to become statesmen, and the whole tendency of his policy was to render our institutions mere forms." There is much truth in this: but surely the Whigs must share the guilt—if guilt there be—for what party of late years have so constantly compelled the country to modify their measures and make amends for their deficiencies?

have become mere instruments to legalise, embody, and execute those decisions to which the exertions of independent thinkers and associated bodies have gradually led the national mind,—it may be questioned whether a man who sympathises and adopts, is not more needed at the helm, in our times, than a man who initiates—still more than one who anticipates or misreads. The day is past when British rulers could govern according to the dictates of their own wisdom; nothing can now be done that the country is not ripe for; and a minister who is too forward for his age, finds himself simply powerless.

“Had the intellect of Sir Robert Peel,” says Mr. Roebuck, “been of a bolder and more original cast, he would probably have been a less successful minister, as in that case he might often have proposed reforms before the nation was prepared to receive them, and thus have diminished his power as a minister while earning the renown of a philosopher. . . . The philosopher who discovers great truths, and collects the evidence by which they are eventually established, must be content to have his reward in the reverence and gratitude of posterity, and must be satisfied with the consciousness of the real value and importance of his discoveries. But the statesman, to be useful, must be powerful; and in a government like ours, and among a practical people like the English, the safest course for a reforming minister is never to be before his age. Let him not be obstinately wedded to any views or opinions—let him be ever ready to hear, and carefully and respectfully listen to, all sides of every question—but let him religiously abstain from appropriating or assenting to any novel conception, until the public thoroughly understands and earnestly adopts it.”—*Preface*, p. xix.

On one memorable instance, however, Sir Robert Peel hung back behind his age. He did not recognise the demand of the nation for reform, and when he did, he refused to bow to its wishes. He opposed the Reform Bill to the last; though when passed, he pro-

claimed it to be "a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question, which no friend to his country would attempt, directly or insidiously, to disturb;" and set himself diligently and with consummate sagacity to the task of reconstructing the disorganised Conservative party, on a basis suited to the altered circumstances of the times. Yet it is to be observed that no man contributed more largely to the success of the Reform Bill than Sir Robert Peel himself,—since, if it had not been for the breaking up of the Tory camp caused by his proceedings in 1829, that great measure could not have been carried, and indeed would never have been proposed. The effect, too, of the discussions on that measure, the conduct of the people regarding it, and their subsequent course at elections, in completing his political education, and making him thoroughly comprehend the middle classes, can scarcely be too highly estimated.

Mr. Disraeli thus sums up his able and discriminating, but somewhat hostile, estimate of his great opponent:—

"One cannot say of Sir Robert Peel, notwithstanding his unrivalled powers of dispatching affairs, that he was the greatest minister this country ever produced; because, twice placed at the helm, and on the second occasion with the court and the parliament equally devoted to him, he never could maintain himself in power. Nor, notwithstanding his consummate parliamentary tactics, can he be described as the greatest party leader that ever flourished among us, for he contrived to destroy the most compact, powerful, and devoted party that ever followed a British statesman. Certainly, notwithstanding his great sway in debate, we cannot recognise him as our greatest orator, for in many of the supreme requisites of oratory, he was singularly deficient. But what he really was, and what posterity will acknowledge him to have been, is the greatest MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT that ever lived."

Mr. Roebuck's estimate is juster and more comprehensive:—

“ His strongest sympathies were with the nation, and not with a dominant section or party; and in this he was pre-eminently distinguished from the Whig statesmen to whom he was through life opposed. . . . His conduct during his last administration, though it gave offence, never to be forgiven, to some of his immediate partisans, made him the most popular minister, and the most powerful statesman known in England since the days of the first William Pitt. The nation had confidence in his prudence; they believed him sincerely anxious to promote the welfare of his country, and to have real sympathies with the industrious millions of our people. There was a feeling, every day growing stronger, that he was destined to be *the people's minister*; — that he would be able, by means of popular support, to which at length he could alone look for aid, to depart from the rule by which the whole government of the country had hitherto been placed exclusively in the hands of the aristocracy, and to unite upon the Treasury bench a really national administration. . . . Entertaining the hope that such was to be the ultimate mission of Sir Robert Peel, the nation looked with eager expectation to his future career. He rose in their affections in proportion as he lost the favour of his party, and was never so powerful as when by that party he was at last scouted, and deemed to be for ever dismissed.”

This is quite true. During the four years that elapsed between his resignation of office and his death, he grew daily in intellectual and moral stature, and in favour with the great body of the people. For the first time in his long life he was free—unshackled by any party ties, and liberated from all embarrassing antecedents. He stood there as the great “Moderator”—a sort of consulting physician to the nation, to be called in when ordinary doctors were at fault. There was one service especially which it was hoped he might live to render. Rich in official experience, but unhampered by official connection—exempt from the snares and prejudices of ambition, because no ambition could aspire to a higher eminence than he had already reached—apart and aloof from all the embarrassments of party,



since he had for ever and voluntarily ceased to be a leader—it was felt that he, and he only, was the statesman competent to examine and report upon the whole machine of our government—to point out the defects in its *system*, and to suggest the quarter in which a remedy was to be sought; in a word, to reform Downing Street, and recall both the Legislature and the Executive to their original and proper functions. To enter further upon this topic—prolific as it is—would lead us into a digression now, for which we have no space left.

We must conclude. When the Duke of Wellington, on receiving the melancholy tidings of Sir Robert Peel's death, emphatically pronounced him to be "the most honest man" he had ever known, the world was somewhat surprised at the peculiar terms of the eulogy. We were not. We can quite understand what the Duke meant. He intended to declare that in all his course his colleague had always appeared to him perfectly single-minded and conscientious. The praise was discriminating and deserved. We fully believe that Sir Robert Peel at all times did what he thought best for the country, according to his light and the scope of his vision; that whether he walked straightly or tortuously—whether he changed or persevered—whether he led his party or deserted them, he acted in each and every case as his conscience, in its then state of enlightenment, dictated.\* He did this at the cost of much personal pain, for he was a man acutely sensitive

\* It is an interesting fact, and one that has come to us on high authority, that, for many of the latter years of his life, Sir Robert was in the invariable habit, at whatever hour he returned from Downing Street or the House of Commons, of reading for half an hour in some serious or religious book, before retiring to rest. It was only by this habit, he said, that he could keep his mind calm and clear after the distractions and irritations of the day.

to the opinions and feelings of those around him,—at once proud and sensitive. Therefore we place him morally, though perhaps not intellectually, in the very first rank of public men. Would that all had his singleness of mind, his genuine patriotism, his honesty in seeking truth, his candour and courage in avowing error!

Sir Robert Peel was a scholar, and a liberal and discerning patron of the arts. He was a man of fine and sensitive organisation, and of judicious and ready benevolence. Though not social, he had many literary interests, and much elegant and cultivated taste. Possessed of immense wealth, with every source and avenue of pleasure at his command, it was no slight merit in him that he preferred to such refined enjoyment the laborious and harassing service of his country. He had his recompense. By his unblemished private character, by his unrivalled administrative ability, by his vast public services, by his unvarying moderation, he had inspired, not only England, but the world at large, with a respect and confidence such as few attain. After many fluctuations of repute, he had at length reached an eminence on which he stood—independent of office and of party—one of the recognised potentates of Europe; face to face, in the evening of life, with his work and his reward;—his work, to aid the progress of those principles on which, after much toil, many sacrifices, and long groping towards the light, he had at last laid a firm grasp; his guerdon, to watch their triumph and their influences. Nobler occupation man could not aspire to; sublimer power no ambition need desire; greater earthly reward, God, out of all the riches of his boundless treasury, has not to bestow.

PROSPECTS OF BRITISH STATESMANSHIP.\*

IN a country in which action is so rapid, interests so varied, and occupation so intense and unremitting, as with us—where men of business, philosophers, and politicians, pursue each their own special object with exclusive and overestimating eagerness—where the whole nation is engaged with healthy cheerfulness in unremitting effort and an unpausing race, it is not easy for those to find a hearing who would call upon the actors in this exciting drama to draw up for a brief space, and consider themselves, their position, and their aims, as becomes beings—

“ Holding large discourse,  
Looking before and after.”

Yet these breathing moments in the hasting course of time—these Sabbatical hours of the world's quick existence—in which we may review the past, estimate where we are standing, and ascertain whither we are tending, in which we may calculate our progress and catch a clear vision of our goal, may take stock of our acquisitions and achievements, investigate the value of our objects, and compare them with the price we are paying for them, and the means which remain to us of obtaining them—such pauses for reflection, introspec-

\* From the “North British Review,” May, 1852.

1. *History of the Whig Administration of 1830.* By J. A. ROEBUCK. London: 1852.

2. *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, III., IV., V., and VI. By THOMAS CARLYLE. London: 1850.

3. *The Statesman.* By HENRY TAYLOR. London: 1836.

tion, and foresight, are particularly necessary if we would not sink from the dignity of men—

“ Who know themselves, and know the ways before them,  
And from among them choose considerately,  
With a clear foresight, not a blindfold courage;  
And having chosen, with a steadfast mind  
Pursue their purposes ” —

into mere unconscious instruments of destiny, mere unresisting floaters on the stream of time.

In politics especially, a mere “hand-to-mouth” existence—living, as the French express it, *au jour le jour*—can never be worthy of men who boast to be free and claim to be progressive. Yet it is the besetting peril, and has always been the peculiar reproach of our busy British statesmen. Overwhelmed as they constantly are with a mass of routine work, which must be got through; and having literally to fight their way inch by inch against a host of antagonists, whose sole business is antagonism; knowing that every step will be a struggle, and, therefore, naturally enough, stepping less where they wish and think they *ought* than where they must and think they *can*, they can rarely get sufficiently out of the press and throng to see far, or sufficiently free from the urgent demands of the moment to deliberate or muse. The position *apart*, the dry ground of security *above*, which are indispensable to the profound and patient thought out of which wisdom emerges, are almost wholly denied them. The country, too, seems content that it should be so; it is satisfied to be served by men who do the duties of the day with capacity and decorum; it is never “over-exquisite to cast the shadow of uncertain evils;” it goes on from generation to generation, meeting unforeseen emergencies with extemporised expedients, stopping up a gap with anything that comes to hand,

caulking a shot-hole with the nearest hat, slitting open the leather where the shoe pinches, putting in a casual patch when the rent in the old garment becomes absolutely indecent and unbearable, cobbling up the old house as the family enlarges, or the roof decays, or the walls crumble and fall away, adding here a buttress and there a shed, and sometimes, in a crisis of severe pressure or unwonted ambition, joining a Grecian colonnade to a Gothic gable. In this strange style we have proceeded almost for centuries, till the incongruities of our dwellings, our clothing, and our policy, have grown obvious even to our unobservant and accustomed eye. We go on swearing against the Pretender long after his last descendant has been laid quietly in a foreign grave; guarding with testy jealousy against the power of the crown long after the crown has been shorn of its due and legitimate authority; risking the loss of our liberties from foreign aggression, rather than support an adequate standing army, because in past times those liberties were threatened by a standing army in the hands of a domestic tyrant; exacting oaths in a court of justice as a security for truth, long after experience and reflection have shown us that those who refuse oaths are the most truthful of all witnesses, and long after our inconsistent liberality has extorted from us the permission to every man to swear after his own fashion;—and committing a host of similar solecisms, all showing how entirely we are still governed by the ideas and traditions of an obsolete and inapplicable age. In an era of new requirements and encircled by new conditions, we are drawing on the arsenals and speaking in the language of the past; and while young and mighty perils, from hitherto undreamed of quarters, are threatening the precious commonwealth, we are haunted by the ghost of some ancestral enemy, or are gibbetting the carcase and demolishing the tomb of

some old danger that was long ago gathered to its fathers.

Our present object is to awaken among our countrymen some degree, not of uneasiness, indeed, but of perception of our dangers and our requirements, some serious and anxious inquiry into the difficulties which we have to meet and into our means of meeting them. Our foreign and international relations are becoming strangely complicated; and the principles which are to guide them in future require to be considered and decided, that our due influence be not impaired by weakness or vacillation. Our relations with our offsets and dependencies are changing and enlarging with the lapse of time; and the principles which are to regulate our colonial policy for the future, must be discussed and laid down in such a manner as to avoid any risk of a disruption of our empire or of dissension among brethren. The social problems which press upon us for solution at home become daily knottier, more urgent, and more complex; and it is essential both to our safety and our welfare that they be neither evaded nor postponed. Finally, the duties of actual administration become every year more difficult and laborious as our wealth and numbers multiply, as our vision of what is needed becomes keener, and as our standard of requirement becomes higher. Now, for all these calls, but most especially for the last, we need statesmen not only of a high but of a peculiar order of talent; and as these calls increase and enlarge, we require both more numerous and more able statesmen. Already it is felt that the work in every public department is augmenting and its difficulties thickening in a most perplexing degree. We are opening our eyes to the extent to which we have been misgoverned, and we are rapidly raising our conception of what government might or ought to be; day by day defects are being discovered and abuses



are being ferretted out and exposed in every ministerial office; and the voice of the country demands that they shall be remedied at once and shall be precluded for the future. We need more and exact more from our public men than at any former period. What means have our public men of meeting this need and these exactions? and what is our immediate prospect of a supply of statesmen adapted to the functions and equal to the necessities of their position?

Perhaps there has never been a period in our recent history where so poor a present had the prospect of being succeeded by a still poorer future. Generally speaking, each of the great parties in the state has been able to muster a sufficient number of men to form a cabinet capable of undertaking the destinies of the country,—men whose views, indeed, we might deem erroneous, but of whose proved capacity there could be no question. *Now*, it is probable, that if an accident or an epidemic were to sweep off three or four of our oldest and most acknowledged leaders—whose end in the natural course of events cannot be far distant—all parties together could scarcely supply the fifteen ministers needed to complete a cabinet, of individuals whose fitness for such a position has been tried and is admitted by the nation. Our list of actual statesmen is alarmingly scanty; our list of potential ones is scantier still. Peel and Wellington—the great parliamentary and the great military genius of the age—have both passed off the stage. After a life of toil, the one has found rest and the other is hourly looking forward to it. Who remain to replace them? Of the veterans who, by universal consent, hold a first rank, there are only four—Lord John Russell, Lord Derby, Lord Palmerston, and Sir James Graham. (We need take no account of their contemporaries, for Lord Lansdowne, never brilliant, but always sensible and mode-

rate, is now seventy-two years of age, and is weary, broken down, and anxious for immediate retirement; Lord Aberdeen, amiable and honourable, but yielding and never distinguished, is now sixty-eight, and may, without disrespect, be spoken of in the preterite tense; Mr. Herries and Mr. Goulburn, both verging on their seventieth year, were always more or less so). But the four above named are all first-rate men. We may dissent from their policy, we may oppose their measures, we may dislike their persons, but it is impossible not to admit their full competency. Lord Derby is a gallant and brilliant nobleman; Lord John Russell is a statesman of thorough education and long experience and chivalric honour; Sir James Graham is unquestionably the ablest administrator in parliament; and Lord Palmerston, beyond rivalship, the most complete and skilful diplomatist of his time. But these four are all of that rank and standing that remain to us; and Lord Derby, the youngest of them, is such a martyr to the gout, as almost, if not quite, to disqualify him for the toils of office. Far from being always ready for any call, he can never foresee whether he will be able to go down to the House on any given day, or whether he may not, for weeks at a time, be as unfit for business as the first Lord Chatham. Lord John Russell, whose health was never strong, is now sixty years of age; Sir James Graham the same; and Lord Palmerston is sixty-eight. When these men fail or disappear, as they soon must, who are they who will step into their places by right of natural inheritance?—the younger statesmen of the second rank.

It is in this class that our poverty is most apparent. It affords only three men qualified by capacity and character for the chief offices of State—Lord Clarendon, Lord Grey, and Mr. Gladstone. On these men we may soon have to place our main reliance. The

first is already marked out by the general voice as our future premier. He, of all men, would be best fitted to unite all that remains of vigour and adaptability in the old Whig party with the rising talent and bolder views of the more able Radicals, and to command the allied forces. He has high rank and aristocratic connections; he is noted for firm purpose and conciliating manners; he has shown first-rate ability, both as a diplomatist and an administrator; whatever he has had to do he has done well; his views are sound, comprehensive, and generous; and he is free from those narrow trammels of connection and tradition which so often cloud the vision, complicate the measures, and paralyze the energy of Lord John Russell. Moreover, though a man of thoroughly broad and statesmanlike capacity, and nothing of a *doctrinaire*, he is known to sympathize more largely than any of his class with the opinions of the more sober and reflective of the popular party; he will be freer than any other statesman to act as he deems right, because more exempt than any other from embarrassing antecedents; and the skill and courage with which he has governed Ireland, afford a guarantee of his competency to the far easier task of governing England. Happily he is still young (fifty-two), and may possibly be our pilot for nearly a quarter of a century before his powers decay. His brother, Charles Villiers, fought the battle of the corn-laws side by side with Richard Cobden, and he himself was known to sympathize largely with the people in that memorable contest.

Mr. Gladstone is a man whom everybody respects, and whom all who know him love. He has many of the qualities of an English statesman, — wide knowledge, thorough training, a conservative temper, and singular caution. He is, moreover, a man of unstained and lofty character, gentle and generous feelings,

and a most sensitive and elaborate conscientiousness. But the tone of his mind is delicate and fine rather than strong; he is inclined to scholastic niceties, which greatly impair his efficiency in political life; and though his mental and moral qualities will always make him influential, yet his subtle and refining temperament will prevent him from ever becoming a popular statesman. He may be a valuable adviser and a useful moderator, even perhaps a fair administrator, but scarcely a great leader.

Lord Grey raised great hopes of his future eminence and usefulness so long as he was out of office. "*Omnium consensu capax imperii, nisi imperâsset.*" Though always deplorably tainted with some of the worst faults of the Whig aristocracy — their narrow sympathies, imperious dogmatism, and cold haughtiness of temper — he was a laborious and thoughtful politician. His views were always worthy of attention, often original, sometimes bold and comprehensive. He promised to become what England so much wants — a philosophical reformer. But office — that great test and touchstone of genuine capacity — has not only lowered his reputation, but we fear has damaged it so effectually as to render him almost unavailable for future service. Not only has he disappointed all hopes, made innumerable enemies, and done nothing well, but all his early defects seem to have been aggravated; and any such improvement as will again qualify him to become a leading statesman can scarcely be hoped for from a man who is too impatient to listen, and too proud to learn.

It may seem strange that in our survey of the prospective servants of the country, we should pass over such members of the late Cabinet as Sir Francis Baring, Mr. Fox Maule, Lord Carlisle, and Mr. Labouchere. But the first has never greatly distinguished himself,

and is understood to have a rooted dislike to the fatigues and annoyances of office. The second is a man of talent and industry, but has scarcely made his way into the category of statesmen. Lord Carlisle, though he has been a laborious and most useful minister in his day, and though his genial manners, genuine, wide, warm benevolence, and ready popular sympathies, will always make him an ornament and a source of confidence to any cabinet which he may join, is unquestionably not a man of commanding ability. He is an honour to his station and his country, but he would be the first to confess his own incapacity for the position of a leader. Sir George Grey's health is quite broken. Mr. Labouchere is a soft-minded, philanthropic, and honourable man — one of that class of rich, cultivated, noble country gentlemen, of whom England has so much reason to be proud; but his talents are not shining, and he has far too little ambition to allow us to count upon him as a permanent candidate for office. Two noblemen remain, of whom the highest hopes are entertained by those who know them, and who will probably henceforth take rank among our leading statesmen — Lord Granville and Lord Dalhousie. Both are in the prime of life, and seem endowed with all the needful qualifications; but they can scarcely yet be said to have been sufficiently proved for us to predict their future with any certainty. Of those younger still, three have already appeared above the horizon, and may become stars in time. All are men of talent and of high name and connection. The Duke of Argyll has manifested already in his writings comprehensive views and a masterly logical faculty, and seems resolved to devote himself to public life. Lord Stanley, though an inferior man to his father, and though he has most injudiciously and prematurely announced his attachment to the falling cause of protection, is said to



possess very considerable powers. Mr. Frederick Peel is cautious, able, and fond of work, and has avoided his father's early fault, ranking himself at once among the moderate but advancing liberals.

Here ends our list of rising and proximate statesmen from all the great parties which have hitherto divided political power between them, and it must be allowed to be an alarmingly meagre one. We do not mean that among the holders, past and present, of the subordinate ministerial offices there are not several men of great ability, whose capacity to render good service to their country we in no way doubt. Lord Stanley of Alderley is a man of respectable powers and business habits, and Mr. Wilson is a politician and administrator of vast industry, and no ordinary talent ; but the number of such men is not large, and they are not *leaders*, nor perhaps qualified to be so. "But," it will be asked, "are there in parliament no other men of capacity and eminence, who, if not yet finished statesmen, are, at all events, fitted to become such ; who, though hitherto undreamed of for official posts, are yet only excluded by virtue of their opinions ; and who, as the country gradually advances in the career of liberalism, will become the exponents of its views, and therefore the natural administrators of its destinies ?"—We think not.\* Mere opinions exclude men only for a time : character and habits of mind exclude them for ever. In the first

\* This was written before the formation of the present cabinet, the list of whose members has amazed the world. But we do not feel disposed to alter or qualify any of our observations. With the exception of Mr. Herries (who is *passé*), the only *known* member of that cabinet in the House of Commons, is Mr. Disraeli, of whom all that can be said is, that, as far as he can be judged of by the past, he unites the maximum of parliamentary cleverness with the minimum of statesmanlike capacity.



case, their day inevitably comes round: in the second, no lapse of years and no change of public sentiments can float them into power. Now, there are at present five men of great weight, and value, and prominence in the House of Commons, whom no one thinks of with much hope—scarcely even without dread—as possible ministers. It seems generally felt, and not among aristocratic and official circles only, that notwithstanding their undoubted ability and vigour, their natural and permanent place is in the opposition. They either have not the needful endowments of statesmen, or they have qualities and defects which neutralize and overpower these endowments. Mr. Disraeli is the apparent leader of a party, is undoubtedly its spokesman, and is by far the most brilliant and formidable rhetorician in the House. His prominence there, if backed by the suitable qualities, would indubitably make him a cabinet minister and secretary of state if ever the Tories, or their ghosts, the Protectionists, came into power. The House always fills to hear him speak; and the fierce and polished sarcasms which he launches on his opponents are the nightly delight of his associates. Yet no one ever dreams of him as a leading minister. The country would not endure his appointment to any important post, and his undeniable parliamentary claim to such is well known to be a source of serious embarrassment to his party. He is felt by all parties to be a mere adventurer,—a man without fixed principles or deliberate and sincere public aims,—a man to whom political life is a game to be played (as respectably as may be) for his own advancement. Neither his character nor his abilities give him any *weight* with any class or party. Moreover, he is universally admitted to be destitute both of the statesmanlike capacity, the statesmanlike knowledge, and the statesmanlike sobriety and solidity of mind and morals. He belongs, not to the bees, but

to the wasps and the butterflies of public life. He can sting and sparkle, but he cannot work. His place in the arena is marked and ticketed for ever.—Mr. Bright is a man of very vigorous though rough ability, his diligence is very meritorious, and he is gradually gaining the ear of the House; but his education is imperfect, his views narrow, his tone low, dogmatic, and somewhat vulgar; he has nothing of the statesman about him, and we do not imagine that he can ever soar above the position of a “tribune of the people.” No one looks to him for a moment as a future minister.—Mr. Cobden’s mind is of a far higher order, his views more comprehensive, and his whole being and organisation cast in a far finer mould; but his opinions and his language are too often extreme, and he has the great misfortune of being linked with a party altogether inferior to, and unworthy of himself; and it is to be feared that—

“He will lower to their level day by day,  
What is fine within him growing coarse, to sympathize with  
clay.”

Moreover, he also, like Mr. Bright, labours under the almost insuperable defect of an incomplete early education. It is not that his knowledge is not far greater, and his comprehension of social questions often far juster, than those of many men who are useful and even eminent in official life; but he wants that indescribable enlargement and refinement of intellect, the faculty for understanding other minds, and appreciating hidden wants and sympathies, which is indispensable to those who would aspire to govern a nation of cultivated men, and which an early acquaintance with the more elegant and profound branches of learning can alone confer. A man who could say that a copy of the “Times” contained more wisdom and sound information than the whole of

Thucydides, even were it but in a hasty explosion of spleen, must be wanting in some of the most essential endowments and sensibilities of a true statesman.—Sir William Molesworth and Mr. Roebuck are not open to this objection: they are both men of finished training as well as of popular sympathies, and perfectly capable of comprehending the requirements of a country like ours, and of taking wide and ample views of the science of policy. But Sir William is rich and lazy—social rather than ambitious; and though commanding the confidence of the people, would, we suspect, prefer being “proximate” to being actual minister.—Mr. Roebuck’s valuable qualities are sadly clouded by certain constitutional defects. He is bold, honest, and courageous as few men are; but he is too apt to imagine that he has an absolute monopoly of these great gifts. He speaks truth both to constituents and to colleagues with an unflinching conscientiousness that is too seldom seen, but he takes care to put this truth in its most unpalatable and irritating form. He is far less extreme in his opinions than in his manner of stating them; and if he had added the *suaviter in modo* to the *fortiter in re*, he could scarcely fail to have been by this time far advanced on his way to high office. As it is, it seems to be generally admitted, even by those who think him one of the ablest politicians of the day—and we confess ourselves to be of this number—that his temper utterly precludes him from entering any ministry; since it is a temper which not only makes him unnecessarily and often unintentionally offensive to those with whom he comes in contact, but colours his whole views of men and things. He is a sort of radical Lord Grey; and it would, we imagine, be even less difficult to find a cabinet that would act with him, than a cabinet with which he would not consider it derogatory to act.

Let us now sum up the strength of our available and

regular ministerial army, rank and file, on which the country will have to rely when the four worn and veteran statesmen whom we first named have retired or died. We have three cabinets to provide for—Tory, Liberal, and Medium. For the first we have literally no one: for the second we have Lords Clarendon, Granville, and Carlisle; with Mr. Fox Maule, Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Frederick Peel: for the third we have Lord Dalhousie, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Sidney Herbert, and Mr. Cardwell, among the tried men; the Duke of Newcastle, the Duke of Argyll, and possibly Lord Stanley among the prospective ones. The coalition of the whole set—proved men and hopeful men—could scarcely form one complete and competent ministry among them: and such a coalition we have not seen since the time of Pelham, and cannot look for in these more earnest and conscientious days. When Lord Derby has fallen a victim to the gout, Lord John Russell to feeble health, Lord Palmerston and Sir James Graham to the course of natural decay; when Sir George Grey has sunk under combined illness and toil, and Sir Francis Baring and Mr. Labouchere have yielded to their wish for ease and peace—*all of which events must happen soon, and may happen to-morrow*—we shall have to construct a ministry fit to govern and to guide our great empire out of the scanty materials we have enumerated. We must have a Premier, a Chancellor of the Exchequer, three Secretaries of State, a First Lord of the Admiralty, a Secretary or Lord Lieutenant for Ireland, and a President of the Board of Trade—*eight* in all, who must be men of superior and tried capacity and character, besides nine others of respectable ability; and we have, taking all parties together, only *six* adequate for chiefs, and about seven for secondary parts. Truly, our political army is in lamentable want of recruits.

To some parties, however, this state of affairs pre-

sents no cause for uneasiness. "In a country and an age so enlightened, so free, so self-governing as ours, we do not," they say, "need statesmen of lofty and surpassing genius to rule us. We can dispense with 'great men.'" There is some truth in this view; but it is partial and superficial truth. We can dispense with great men better than most nations, but we cannot dispense with them altogether, nor without mischief and without danger. Or rather, we can dispense with the *kind of greatness* which we do not require, but not with that kind which we do require. Ministers of vast philosophic capacity, like Bacon; of profound, systematic, thorough-going policy, like Strafford; of commanding and predominating genius, like Chatham; of imperious and overbearing resolve, like Pitt; or of haughty and unbending will, like the Duke of Wellington,—we perhaps do not need now. Their age is past. They would find no fitting scope, and no decorous place in our democratic and balanced constitution. Much of their superiority would be thrown away, and much of their power would be wasted in fruitless contest with the municipal and self-ruling element in our national character. Nor do we need as we once did—and valuable as such would still be—statesmen endowed with the special and glorious gift of legislative genius,—men who possess a penetrating and unerring insight into the character of the people, a thorough knowledge of their wants, and that peculiar organising and arranging faculty, which can adapt laws and decrees to these two guiding conditions. The nation has now so many ways of explaining its own character, and proclaiming its own wants, that no one who can read and listen needs to misunderstand them, or remain ignorant of them; while at the same time it abounds in men of quick observation and of deep thought, whose united action in speech and writing even more than supplies



the place, which, in less free or less developed countries, is filled by individual statesmen of paramount and commanding power. With us a hundred sensible and reflective men combine to do the work of one great man. Through the mighty, pervading, unresting engine of the press, they instruct, persuade, inoculate, and guide the people, as formerly and elsewhere a Clarendon, a Burleigh, a De Witt, a Hardenberg, or a Washington, might have done. More and more the policy of Britain is directed, its opinions formed, the tone of the national mind decided, its tendencies developed, its legislation modified, amended, and matured, by its writers rather than by its formal and official politicians. In matters of legislation, the unrecognised are often far more influential than the recognised statesmen of the day. In books and pamphlets, in newspapers and reviews, on a hundred noisy platforms, and in a thousand silent studies, the great national work is carried on; and carried on, in all likelihood, with a far greater aggregate of national benefit, if with less rapid and exact attainment of the immediate end, than if it were entrusted to a single statesman, towering far above the mass. Even in parliament, it is probable that sounder views are elicited, and more ultimate good effected by the crude and wild discussions and the bewildering and shallow contributions of many men of imperfect knowledge and superficial understanding, than would be produced by the calm and elaborate exposition of one loftier mind. For the last half century the nation has done its own work. The union with Ireland was probably the last great act of individual legislative statesmanship. Catholic emancipation was extorted by the Irish people. Parliamentary reform was carried by the English people. The re-organisation of the poor-law was the work of men out of parliament and scarcely heard of at the time: they studied the subject, elaborated the plan,



informed and prepared the country,—while ministers were scarcely persuaded to adopt so bold, masterly, and complete a measure. And the last great change in the spirit and direction of our policy—the adoption of Free Trade—was due to no section of statesmen, but solely to the middle classes and their self-elected leaders.

It is not, then, chiefly for the purpose of comprehensive and philosophic legislation that we require public men of superior and commanding ability, but for the purposes of government and administration. Incapacity in this department the floating talent and sense of the country cannot supplement, or can do so only imperfectly and at enormous cost. Incapacity in this department is productive of the most fruitful suffering and evil; it may continue to work its mischief for months and years before it is discovered and proclaimed; yet the press can do nothing but expose it, and parliament can do nothing but discard the actual delinquents and replace them by others who may be no less incompetent. The functions and the powers of ministers, even in this country, where they are so constantly badgered and so closely watched, are vast and appalling. A thousand eyes are constantly observing them, a thousand tongues constantly calling them to account, with all the vigilance of mingled envy, animosity, and patriotism; yet how small a proportion of their daily actions ever come to light or become the subject of public animadversion! How still fewer are discovered, reprehended, and counteracted, before they have run a long course of misery and mischief! We imagine that a hostile and ambitious opposition affords us a sufficient guarantee against matters going much or long amiss. We are deplorably mistaken: it affords us, indeed, a security that ministers will act under a nervous sense of responsibility, and probably, therefore,

with conscientiousness and caution; but it affords, and can afford, no security that they will act with judgment or discretion. Let us consider for a moment what their functions are.\* Each of them, in nine-tenths of the things which he has to do, is virtually absolute in his own department. A number of cases come before him daily in which he must act at once and upon his own judgment and responsibility. Most of these may be routine matters, or may appear unimportant; but each decision may carry with it fearful consequences. Parliament gives or refuses to each minister certain funds for special purposes, but there its action and control cease; the funds are spent as the minister thinks best. The Commander-in-Chief has the appointment of generals in various quarters: he may appoint a plausible fool or a superannuated friend, and the result

\* "The far greater proportion of the duties which are performed in the office of a minister, are and must be performed under no effective responsibility. Where politics and parties are not affected by the matter in question, and so long as there is no flagrant neglect or glaring injustice to individuals which a party can take hold of, the responsibility to parliament is merely nominal, or falls otherwise only through casualty, caprice, and a misemployment of the time due from parliament to legislative affairs. Thus the business of the office may be reduced within a very manageable compass, without creating public scandal. By evading decisions wherever they can be evaded; by shifting them on other departments or authorities, where by any possibility they can be shifted; by giving decisions upon superficial examinations, categorically, so as not to expose the superficiality by propounding the reasons; by deferring questions till, as Lord Bacon says, 'they resolve themselves;' by undertaking nothing for the public good which the public voice does not call for; by conciliating loud and energetic individuals at the expense of such public interests as are dumb, or do not attract attention; by sacrificing everywhere what is feeble and obscure to what is influential and cognizable; by such means and shifts as these the functionary may reduce his business within his powers, and perhaps obtain for himself the most valuable of all reputations in this line of life—that of being 'a safe man.'" — *The Statesman*, by Henry Taylor, p. 151.

is and has been sad reverses, fearful slaughter, perilous discomfiture. From indolence, prejudice, or incapacity, he may so mismanage the internal organisation of the army, that when an emergency arises we have scarcely a regiment fit for efficient service; he may retain flint guns when every other nation has adopted percussion-caps; he may stick close to miserable muskets when everywhere else they have been superseded by improved rifles; he may allow our ordnance to fall so far behind the age as to become our own dread and our enemy's laughing-stock; he may dress our soldiers so that they cannot march, and mount our cavalry so that they cannot charge. All this has been done; much of it is said to be done now. Nay more, he not only may commit many of these errors, it is probable that he will. Inaction is always easier and often safer than activity; changes are troublesome, unwelcome, and costly; and it requires some nerve to face a parliamentary debate on an increased item in the estimates. Thus, without the public knowing, without parliament vituperating, our army may fall into utter inefficiency, while appearances are well kept up; and the nation may be suddenly awakened from its apathy to trace, when it is too late, defeat and discredit to administrative incapacity, and to find itself called upon at a tremendous cost to redeem the consequences of having trusted a lazy or incompetent commander. It would be invidious to specify too closely; but recent history and present circumstances may supply to every one the needed commentary and confirmation.—Again, the first Lord of the Admiralty, and his chief Secretary, decide what stores shall be laid in, and how and whence; what ships shall be built and commissioned, how they shall be manned and armed, who shall command them, and where they shall be sent. If this is done, as we know it often is done, without discernment or discretion,

consequences may ensue which it will require years of care and millions of money to obliterate. Not only may the public money be infamously and unavailingly squandered, but public servants may be drowned or poisoned by wholesale. An ill-appointed vessel, under an incompetent commander, may go down with a whole regiment of soldiers on board. A reckless or hot-headed captain, whose character the Admiralty ought to have known, may involve us in a dangerous quarrel — possibly in a costly war. Mismanagement or misplacement of our naval strength may expose our own shores to imminent and deadly risk, may compromise our long-established maritime supremacy, and compel us to submit to insult which at the moment we are unprepared to resist. Hundreds of thousands of pounds, which might have commissioned a dozen ships, and raised the wages and satisfied the wishes of whole crews of deserving seamen, may be frittered away in building ships that will not sail, and then cutting them into two again; in constructing iron steamers which will not stand round shot, and are therefore wholly useless; or in making vessels too large for their engines, and ordering engines too heavy for the ships. Hundreds of thousands more may be wasted from the want of a simple system of checks and vouchers, such as every private establishment possesses, but such as Mr. Ward's celebrated circular betrayed the absence of in the navy. All this may be directly traceable to the negligence, ignorance, or incapacity of the principal officials; yet the country may know nothing of it for years, and when informed of it, can do nothing but dismiss the offenders and appoint others who may be to the full as incapable. All this, too, our recent annals may amply illustrate. — The Colonial Secretary has, if possible, still greater power of irresponsible, unchecked, and undiscoverable mischief. He governs, nearly auto-

cratically, forty dependencies, some of them larger than the mother country, whose dearest interests he may irreparably damage, whose safety he may jeopardize, and whose affections he may alienate by an injudicious despatch, a careless decision, or a bad appointment. He may destroy the property of hundreds, he may undermine the commerce of a district, he may produce or prolong wars of the most irritating and unprofitable kind, as in New Zealand and at the Cape; he may act over again on a small scale, the complicated blunders and sad catastrophes of 1776; and the country which he is ruining, can neither detect nor control him. His power of mischief is almost equal to that of the father of evil. All this, again, the annals of Canada, Australasia, and Jamaica, show to be no mere, no speculative possibility, but in some degree, in some form, in some quarter, a matter of yearly occurrence.—The same remarks will apply with almost equal force to the Governor-General of India, on whose judgment the most momentous questions as to war and peace in our Eastern empire almost hourly depend. How much depends on the soundness of this judgment, let Burmah, Scinde, Cabul, and the Punjab, testify.—At home, indeed, we can watch the Home Secretary more closely, and check him somewhat more promptly, yet, in nearly every thing that relates to the administration of justice and the disposal of criminals, what a mass of vital arrangements depends upon his secret and absolute fiat! What shall be done with condemned offenders; whether and whither they shall be transported, or in what hulks they shall be confined; what system of prison discipline shall be adopted, and to whom the carrying out of experiments on which so much depends, shall be confided; what criminals shall be left for execution, and whose sentences shall be remitted or commuted;—all these things are decided, not by parliament, nor by the



country, but by one man and his subordinates, who act as they think proper, and whose capacity and wisdom are therefore questions of national importance, second certainly to none.—And, to conclude, what fearful contingencies often hang upon the right or wrong decision, the tact, the forbearance, the firmness, the temper, the discretion of the Foreign Secretary, whose line of conduct is fixed upon in the secrecy of his own cabinet, and whose proceedings are seldom known to the country till many months after they have been in operation, and till their results, however mischievous, have long been wholly irremediable. A European war—the extent, the termination, and the significance of which no prophet can foresee—may depend, and has ere now depended, on the conduct, temper, and opinions of the single man whom we place at the head of this particular department. And shall we be satisfied to have only a few mediocre and untried men to select him from?

When such are the tremendous—and though not irresponsible, yet certainly uncontrolled—powers which we place in the hands of those who administer our national affairs, when every decision which they take involves the welfare and happiness of thousands, when the country may be called upon to expiate, with its dearest lives and its richest treasure, every blunder they may commit through imperfect knowledge or inadequate capacity, who shall say that we do not require in our public men the most commanding ability—powers the most special and the most rare? The magnitude of the interests at stake cannot be exaggerated; the talents required for the task can scarcely be estimated by too high a standard. The wellbeing of a nation, and of that portion of human progress which it influences and decides, has to be provided for. How cautious, and how deliberately tested, ought to be the choice of those to whom it is confided;—how rich, numerous, varied, and



select, should be the list of candidates out of whom our election must be made! These considerations may lead us to perceive the dangers which threaten us from the paucity and poverty of administrative materials which we have explained above: it remains to inquire into a few of the causes whence this poverty has arisen, and into the quarter in which a remedy for it is to be sought.

It is customary to attribute this scanty supply of public men in a great measure to the aristocratic exclusiveness of the two great parties which have hitherto divided the power and management of the state between them. The Whigs, in particular, it is alleged, have always been notorious for unwillingness to admit to a real *bonâ fide* participation in either the honours or emoluments of office, any but those who were connected with their chiefs by family ties, or who had the privilege of moving in their polished and fastidious circles. They have shrunk still more than the Tories from genuine and liberal alliances with men of no family or rank, even when these men had rendered them the most signal aid in their political contests, and were far superior to themselves in administrative and parliamentary ability. They have always been noted for breeding in and in; and the usual consequences of such exclusiveness have followed. Even Burke, it is to be remembered, the great political philosopher of his day, and long the ornament and the strength of the Whig party—a man whose name will live in reverence when all his colleagues and contemporaries are forgotten—was never admitted to a seat in the cabinet, but, when his party came into power, was unworthily delegated to one of those offices of secondary influence and emolument, reserved for able and indispensable, but untitled, allies. Since that time, Poulett Thomson and Huskisson are, we believe, the only unconnected plebeians (out of the legal profession) who have ever attained the dignity of cabinet ministers

among the Whigs; and the first of these reached that post only by slow degrees, and through the personal friendship of a simple-minded and honourable man (Lord Althorp), and held it only for a short period. Whenever a popular leader has attained such eminence in parliament that he cannot safely or decently be passed over, it has been customary to offer him some minor post, the acceptance of which, though it might ultimately lead to further advancement, would impose upon its holder the duty of defending the measures of his principals, and sharing in the disgrace attached to their impropriety, clumsiness, or failure, without conferring upon him the smallest share in the previous discussion or concoction of them. Such posts are very properly offered to *rising* men of promise; but on such they are rarely bestowed by the Whigs. Such posts can scarcely be proposed to men whose character is high, whose position is made, whose talents have already won for them wide influence and independent power, without something approaching to insult. Mr. Cobden, for example, was perhaps too young and too inexperienced, in 1846, for an office of first-rate dignity and power, though fifteen years older than Mr. Pitt when he was Prime Minister, and than Mr. Peel when Secretary for Ireland; — yet how would it have been dignified or decent for him, with his position as a party leader, his vast influence in the country, and a high character to lose or to confirm, to have accepted the offered vice-presidency of the Board of Trade, with no seat in the cabinet, and consequently with no control over the proceedings of a ministry who might drag him through any dirt, and cover him with any obloquy? Till our great political chiefs recognise and bend to the necessity of enlisting in their service, on honourable and generous terms, and thus training in time for future eminence, all rising politicians, of whatever rank, who display promising

capacity—till they can stoop to renew their worn-out blood from that middle class which is so rich in strong and practical ability—our supply of statesmen can scarcely be otherwise than scanty.

There is considerable truth in this complaint, though, perhaps, something exaggerated. It is certainly much to be desired, that the ministers who are to rule the country should be chosen from as wide a basis as possible, and that neither wealth, rank, nor connections, should be regarded as indispensable pre-requisites for high office — wherever middle-class men have in them the materials of statesmen they should be appointed as freely as any others. But does the fault lie altogether with those who have the disposal of official places? Have the middle classes sent up to parliament men trained and qualified for statesmanship? Have the sober wisdom, the cautious views, the comprehensive knowledge, the wide and liberal instruction, the capacity for seeing all sides of a question, and for looking beyond superficial appearances and immediate and transitory consequences — have these, the peculiar qualities which mark a man out as fit for office, been also the qualities specially sought for by the middle classes, and peculiarly honoured in their representatives? — Have not, on the contrary, the shallow, the noisy, the violent, the flashy, the men of narrow vision and imperfect education, the men who echoed, rather than the men who opposed, the passions and prejudices of the place and hour, been chosen by preference for parliament? How many members have been sent up by the middle classes, from among their own ranks, out of whom statesmen could be made — to whom ministers, without rashness, and without guilt, could intrust the headship of any department? Is it the “stump-orator” from the Tower Hamlets? Is it the medical, or the fashionable, member for Finsbury? Is it the gentleman who sits for Bolton,

so modest, and so highly educated? Or the gentleman who sits for Ashton, so renowned for his sincerity? Is it the dethroned Railway King who represents Sunderland? Or the rich man who represents one of the Newcastles? Is it the apostle of temperance who sits for Derby, or the honourable member for Montrose, to whom age has brought no experience and little enlightenment? We might go on through a long list; but it is needless, and would sound invidious. It would be difficult to name a single man of the middle class in parliament who has displayed any superior ability, and who is not either in office, or, by some peculiarity or defect, obviously unfitted for it. Mr. Shiel, Mr. Wyse, Mr. Ward, were all in office, till they accepted diplomatic posts. Mr. Hawes was in office till, after repeated failures, he sank in despair upon his present feather bed. Mr. Baines and Mr. Strutt have been in office, and will be, we trust, again. And Charles Buller, an abler man than any, would probably have risen to high position but for his premature death. Mr. Wilson is in office, or has lately been; who will say, that Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden, or Mr. Roebuck, ought to be? In the present state of affairs, we do not believe, that if the constituencies will send up middle-class men qualified for office there is much fear of their being passed over. There may, indeed, be a lingering indisposition to appoint them to the highest posts; but to these they must fight their way, by convincing *the country* of their pre-eminent qualifications. England will not see her destinies intrusted to a second-rate nobleman while a commoner of unquestioned superiority and fitness stands beside him ready for the task. But the mistake seems to be, to assume that popular leaders and skilful orators have necessarily any statesmanlike qualities or capacities about them. Probably in five cases out of six their appoint-

ment would be scarcely more fatal to the country than to their own fame.

A more really operative cause of the phenomenon we are deploring, may be found in the gradually increasing tendency among our ablest and most fitting men to retire from parliament, and shrink from public life. Many causes contribute to strengthen and to spread this tendency. In the first place, parliament is no longer as comfortable or desirable a place as formerly. The work is far harder, the dignity far less, the collateral and sinister advantages far fewer and more uncertain than they used to be. The labour imposed upon those members who really endeavour to do their duty to their constituencies and their country — and no others can long retain their seats — is so severe, that only the strongest frames can bear it, and only the most obstinate ambition will encounter it. Our senators have to work as hard as the followers of some of the most highly paid professions; and they reap no emolument, little fame, and few thanks. They have to stay in town all summer and to sit up nearly all night. They have often to put a strong control on their own feelings, and severe restrictions on their own tastes. They have to be considerate and courteous to all their constituents, to endure the caprices of the fretful, the complaints of the captious, the exactions of the unreasonable, and often the insults of the vulgar. The title of M.P. used to be a diploma of distinction: it is now too frequently only the badge and livery of servitude. Formerly, it meant access into the best society, a share in the deepest national interests, admission behind the scenes of the most exciting drama. Now, it signifies, for the vast majority of those who hold it, nothing but enrolment in a miscellaneous herd of over-worked and unremunerated drudges. Formerly, too, a seat in parliament often gave a man the means of providing for himself, generally of providing



for his friends: now, happily and righteously, these ignominious and underhand perquisites are nearly all swept away. What wonder then that the quiet, the unambitious, the self-respecting—those who, undazzled by the hollow splendour, and undeceived by youthful dreams, can calmly measure the object against the price, the gain against the sacrifice—should incline to keep out of an arena where so much is to be endured, and, unless for the exceptional few, so little to be achieved! What wonder that one, eminent alike in literature and in parliament, should write thus of the latter life:—  
 “There is little reason, in our opinion, to envy those who are still engaged in a pursuit from which, at most, they can only hope that, by relinquishing liberal studies and social pleasures, by passing nights without sleep, and summers without one glimpse of the beauties of nature, they may attain that laborious, that invidious, that closely watched slavery, which is mocked with the name of power.”

There is another reason, less selfish and more creditable, which induces many men peculiarly qualified to influence, to guide, and to instruct the country, to retire from public life and seek out other channels of patriotic usefulness. Parliament is no longer the sole nor the chief arena in which public service can be rendered. Formerly, parliament was the only place in which the national work was done; a warning voice, if raised anywhere else, was like that of one crying in the wilderness; wisdom and information, speaking elsewhere than at St. Stephen's, spoke without an audience or an echo. It was there that public grievances were made known; it was there that freedom and justice were defended; it was there that public delinquents were brought to public trial and to public shame; it was there that sound views of policy were



argued and inculcated, and sound principles of morality disseminated through the national mind. Parliament was not only the great guardian, but the great educator of the people. Now, the press has superseded many of the functions of parliament, and performs them far more ceaselessly and efficiently than parliament could do. It ferrets out abuses, exposes jobs, and detects secret iniquities and negligences, and strips naked hypocrisies and shams. It represents grievances, denounces oppressions, diffuses information, examines doctrines, and inoculates the country with them. Public meetings too, associations and organisations out of doors, do much to prepare, to instruct, and to inform. In every town, and every circle of society, men who in parliament would be dumb and powerless, are actively at work in forming and spreading their own opinions. It has become easier to act upon parliament through the nation, than upon the nation through the parliament. Hence it has begun to be generally felt, that unless a man be endowed with some rare and special faculties, of which oratory is the first, and a peculiar social tact the second, he will be actually more influential out of parliament than in it. Those who have had an opportunity of tracing back public movements to their origin, are well aware how many of the most important of them are due to men of whom the world never hears, but yet gifted with great ability, and that peculiar ability most adapted for the public service,—who study in quiet and in patience the great social questions of the day, form their views upon them, and then, either by writing or conversation, contrive to indoctrinate others with them; while ostensible members of parliament become the unconscious instruments and mouthpieces of these silent and obscure politicians. Both in the higher and the middle ranks may be found numbers scattered through the land, whose minds are incessantly occupied

with public interests, whose views are far profounder, whose knowledge of affairs is greater, whose mastery of subjects is more complete, and whose actual influence on the world's march is more real and more powerful, than is ever attained by those who are prominent before the country, and who are its nominal rulers and administrators.

But not only are the best men often unwilling to go to parliament—the constituencies are often unwilling to send them there. Those who would make the best legislators and administrators are not always adapted to the tastes or malleable to the purposes of the mass of electors. The qualities which are popular on the hustings are by no means always the qualities which are suited to serve the country in a public capacity, and large constituencies have rarely the judgment to discern what these qualities are, or the patriotism to choose them, when accompanied by cold manners, offensive candour, independent feelings, or unbending tenacity of opinion. Every general election affords instances enough to corroborate our statement. Mr. S. J. Loyd, now Lord Overstone, a man of singular soundness and clearness of view, better acquainted with commercial and financial matters than probably any man living, but too indolent and refining to be easily persuadable to enter on the public arena, was rejected by Manchester. Mr. Macaulay, notwithstanding his unquestioned ability and eloquence, was rejected by Edinburgh; and being unable to find another borough, resigned his seat in the cabinet, and retired to the fame and comfort of a literary life. Lord Morpeth, the most estimable and the most beloved of public men, was defeated in Yorkshire, and was out of parliament for several sessions;—and Sir James Graham, whom all allow to be the ablest administrator now living, has never sat twice in succession for the same borough, and it is believed was recently prevented

from taking office because he dared not risk the chances of a new election.

But the principal cause of the evil we are considering—the inadequate supply of public servants of commanding talent—lies deeper still, and is inherent in the very constitution of a parliamentary government such as ours. The more the country needs capable administrators, and the less it needs orators and legislators, the more the evil will become apparent, and the more defective will our system be found. By an ancient and nearly invariable custom, our ministers are selected exclusively out of our parliamentary notabilities. Yet it is undeniable that the qualities which make men formidable leaders, which render them eminent and powerful in parliament, are very different from those which are required for the efficient and judicious management of government departments. The talking and the acting faculties; the power of doing things well, and the power of defending them skilfully; the talent for “dressing up a statement for the House,” and the talent for finding the policy fitted for an empire; administrative genius and dialectic skill, seldom meet in one mind, and, indeed, belong to wholly distinct classes of intellectual superiority. A Chancellor of the Exchequer may be noted for his thorough mastery of financial science, yet be wholly deficient in the power of addressing a critical audience, or of making out a good case for his measures. Or like a recent appointment, he may be a brilliant rhetorician, yet an absolute ignoramus in matters of commerce or taxation. He may delight the House of Commons, but terrify Lombard Street. The members of parliament may flock down from Bellamy’s as soon as they know that he is on his legs; while the members of the Stock Exchange grow pale when they read of his appointment. The Colonial Secretary, too, may rule distant dependencies with the genius of Wellington or Richelieu, yet

be unable to speak two consecutive sentences in the House, without a solecism or a blunder. Yet our system passes by the solid governor, and selects the brilliant haranguer.

"Under the Tudors and the early Stuarts," writes Mr. Macaulay in his review of Sir W. Temple, "it was generally by courtly arts, or by official skill or knowledge, that a politician raised himself to power. From the time of Charles II., down to our own days, a different species of talent, parliamentary talent, has been the most valuable of all the qualifications of an English statesman. It has stood in the place of all other acquirements. It has covered ignorance, weakness, rashness, the most fatal mal-administration. A great negotiator is nothing compared with a great debater; and a minister who can make a successful speech need trouble himself little about an unsuccessful expedition. This is the talent which has made judges without law, and diplomatists without French; which has sent to the Admiralty men who did not know the stern of a ship from the bowsprit, and to the India Board men who did not know the difference between a rupee and a pagoda; which made a Foreign Secretary of Mr. Pitt, who, as George II. said, had never opened Vattel, and which was very near making a Chancellor of the Exchequer of Mr. Sheridan, who could not work a sum in long division."

Now, this is a prolific source of mischief, which, as long as parliament confined itself to its original functions, was comparatively little felt, but which now, in the course of time, and through the operation of certain gradual and insensible changes, has become increasingly serious and manifest. While parliament was a body of notables assembled for purposes of deliberation and discussion, for voting or refusing taxes, for representing national feelings and proclaiming national grievances, the talent of ready speech, clear statement, skilful dialectic, and vehement denunciation, found their proper vocation, and did good service. But when, in process of time, parliament took upon itself the task of close

supervision and control, and of direct and often minute interference with the executive, when it became virtually a *governing*, as well as a legislating and representing body, very different endowments were needed in its members; and its fitness for its new and self-imposed duties became yearly more questionable. Its constitution is much what it used to be, but its functions are materially altered. As the House of Commons has become more popular and more of a debating club, it has also assumed more and more of the labours which popular debating clubs are singularly unsuited to perform. It was admirably adapted for its ancient and original purpose—not at all so for its modern and superinduced one. It was originally a *checking*, not an *acting*, body—an assembly for securing the subject against the oppression and encroachment of the Crown. In this, its native and intentional function, it is inimitable and unrivalled; for its subsequent and adopted one, it is at best but a clumsy contrivance. It is excellent as a defender of our liberties, and an exponent of our wishes and our wants; but for *governing*, or for preventing misgovernment, it is tedious, ponderous, and inefficient.

“What I had to remark,” observes Mr. Carlyle, “of this long parliament, and of its English predecessors generally, from the times of Rufus downwards, is this perfect veracity of purpose, this exact adaptation to getting the business done that was in hand. Supplies did in some way use to be granted; grievances, such as never fail, did in some way use to be stated and redressed. The silent peoples had their *Parliamentum*, and spake by it to their kings who governed them. In all human government, wherever a man will attempt to govern men, this is a function as necessary as the breath of life; and it must be said the old European populations, and the fortunate English best of all, did this function *well*. The old parliaments were authentic entities; came upon indispensable work, and were in earnest to their very finger-ends about getting it done. . . .



Parliament now, if we examine well, has irrevocably lost certain of its old functions, which it still pretends to do; and has got certain new functions, which it never can do, and yet pretends to be doing,—a doubly fatal predicament. Its functions growing ever more confused in this twofold way, the position of parliament has become a false, and is gradually becoming an impossible one, in modern affairs. It has had to prevent and distort its poor activity in all manner of ways, and at length has diffused itself in oceans of windy talk, reported in *Hansard*; has grown, in short, a national palaver, and is, as I said lately, one of the strangest entities this sun ever looked down upon. For, I think, a national palaver, recognised as sovereign, a solemn convocation of all the stump-orators in the nation to come and govern us, was not seen on the earth till recently.

. . . A parliament, especially a parliament with newspaper reporters firmly established in it, is an entity which by its very nature cannot do work, but can do talk only—which at times may be needed, and at other times may be very needless. Consider, in fact, a body of six hundred and fifty-eight miscellaneous persons set to consult about ‘business,’ with twenty-seven millions, mostly fools, assiduously listening to them;—was there ever since the world began—will there ever be till the world end, any ‘business’ accomplished in these circumstances? We may take it as a fact, and should lay it to heart everywhere, that no sovereign ruler with six hundred and fifty-eight heads, set to rule twenty-seven millions, by continually talking in the hearing of them all, can for the life of it make a good figure in that vocation.”

Every page of our recent history abounds with proofs and examples of the mischiefs and abuses which arise from our inveterate and probably now inevitable habit of arranging all measures and making all appointments with a view to parliamentary considerations. Measures are concocted, not because they are the best adapted to the wants of the country, but because they are the most likely to be easily passed by the Commons, and growlingly sanctioned by the Lords. Men are selected for this or that influential and responsible office, not on



account of any remarkable fitness for the discharge of its functions which has been exhibited by them, or is supposed to lie hidden within them, but because parliamentary support may be conciliated, or parliamentary hostility disarmed, by their appointment. The interests of the country are sacrificed, that the government of the country may be carried on. A commercial minister may be a mere tyro in finance; but the trade of the country must be fettered and endangered by giving him power to carry out his unwise conceptions, that the votes of himself and his supporters may be secured. An incapable nobleman is made Secretary-at-War, and allowed by his mismanagement to sacrifice regiment after regiment, and hazard campaign after campaign, as in the late war, because the cabinet cannot dispense with his brilliant debating powers in the House of Commons. Thousands of valuable lives and millions of valuable treasure are wasted — as at Walcheren — in a fruitless and wretchedly managed expedition, because the Premier chooses to place his own brother at its head, and the Premier is omnipotent in parliament. An indolent, obscure, or superannuated admiral is placed in command of an important squadron, and golden opportunities are lost in senseless evolutions, because the admiral has a host of parliamentary friends, whom it would be dangerous for the ministry to offend. Similar solecisms are committed daily, but it is only in the critical exigencies of war, or when in peace some unforeseen emergency occurs, calling for qualities in appointed servants which they do not possess, that their full consequences come to light. We need go no further back than the peninsular campaigns for abundant examples. Mr. Canning was at that time Foreign Minister, and Mr. Perceval, Premier. The latter was a man of the scantiest ability, but had the confidence of the Crown, and possessed enormous weight in the House

of Commons. The former was a statesman of most brilliant genius, and a skilful and vigorous diplomatist, but wholly destitute of the administrative capacity and diligence to conduct the complicated arrangements of a continental war. He was, however, the great stay of the ministry in debate, and could not be spared. Lord Castlereagh, a nobleman of high honour, and of great parliamentary experience and skill, but of very small natural capacity, was Secretary-at-War. Accordingly, never was the blood and treasure of a country so vexatiously and lamentably wasted as those of England were by these three incapables. Their blunders were scarcely credible, and can only be fairly understood after careful study of Colonel Napier's History. Mr. Canning scattered his agents over Spain, chose them ill, made them independent of each other, allowed and encouraged them to lavish money, arms, and stores on the wretched and ungrateful Spanish generals, hampered his own noble and consummate commander, Sir John Moore, with senseless instructions, turned a deaf ear to his remonstrances and demands, and, when he failed and fell, threw upon him the whole blame of the discomfiture which he himself had prepared. During the long and arduous years in which the Duke of Wellington, with unrivalled and profound strategy, and even statesmanship, fought his way from Lisbon to Bayonne, his own government was his worst enemy, his most formidable and hopeless antagonist. In spite of repeated representations, his troops were left without stores, without shoes, without clothes, without ammunition. The engineering tools sent out were so bad that our engineers were *dependent on those captured from the French*. Besieging batteries, constantly demanded, were either refused or delayed, till the Duke was repeatedly compelled to carry fortresses by assault, which were only half breached, against all the rules of military science,

and at a cost of life which was absolutely appalling. The military chest was constantly empty, and the most important enterprises were in consequence obliged to be abandoned. Reinforcements both of men and money, which were lavished on the incapable Lord Chatham, were denied to the energetic and successful Sir Arthur Wellesley. Officers of high rank neglected or disobeyed his orders, and thus sacrificed his soldiers, endangered his victories, or made them fruitless; yet he dared not punish or cashier them, because the parliamentary influence of their families forbade. Throughout the whole campaign the genius of the Duke had to remedy, and the blood of the soldiers to atone for, the blunders and culpable negligence of Mr. Perceval, Mr. Canning, and Lord Castlereagh. The fate of thousands of brave and valuable men lies at the door of those three ministers, and of the system which made such men so powerful as they were.

To the same system — the system which places at the head of affairs men of parliamentary influence and parliamentary talent, but of no other qualifications for administration or command — may be traced, more or less directly, most of our recent disasters: — the Affghanistan war, with its train of discomfiture and disgrace; the escapades of Lord Ellenborough, whom happily even parliamentary influence could not save from being recalled; the unhappy mess which Governor Fitzroy brought about in New Zealand; the Canadian rebellion; and the Caffre wars. Everywhere the same story. In war, in commerce, in administration, the governed have had to supplement the deficiencies, correct the faults, support the weight, and pay for the blunders of the governors. Everywhere the sense and bottom of the English people and the English soldiers have been called upon to counteract the incapacity or folly of English rulers. In this lies the explanation of what otherwise

might well perplex us, — how is it, namely, that such a system has endured so long, and produced so much less mischief than it seemed calculated to engender. The people, as a whole, are supplying a constant and often unconscious corrective.

“An English seventy-four,” says Mr. Carlyle, “if you look merely at the articulate law and methods of it, is one of the impossiblest entities. The captain is appointed, not by pre-eminent merit in sailorship, but by parliamentary connexion; the men are got by impressment; a press-gang goes out, knocks men down in the streets of sea-towns, and drags them on board, — if the ship were to be stranded, I have heard that they would nearly all run ashore and desert. Can anything be more unreasonable than a seventy-four? Articulately, almost nothing. But it has inarticulate traditions, ancient methods, and habits in it, stoicisms, noblenesses, *true* rules both of sailing and of conduct; enough to keep it afloat on Nature’s veridical bosom after all. See; if you bid it sail to the end of the world, it will lift anchor, go, and arrive. The raging oceans do not beat it back; it, too, as well as the raging oceans, has a relation to Nature, and it does not sink, but under due conditions is borne along. If it meet with hurricanes, it rides them out; if it meet an enemy’s ship, it shivers it to powder; and in short it holds on its way, and to a wonderful extent *does* what it means and pretends to do. Assure yourself, my friend, there is an immense fund of truth somewhere or other stowed in that seventy-four.”

All who have had much to do with ministers, and members of parliament, and those who come into constant social or official contact with them, seldom fail to become conscious of a certain marked and specific character which pervades the whole *genus*. Originally, they may be cast in Nature’s most discrepant moulds. They may be conservative and antique by temper and tradition. They may be liberal and profusive in their sentiments. They may be aggressively benevolent, or carelessly epicurean. They may be fond of labour, or

they may be fond of ease. They may call themselves aristocratic, or may flatter themselves that they are popular. But the same easily recognisable stamp of family likeness is upon them all. They are all *parliament men* — and no mistake. They have all been stretched on the same Procrustean bed, fused in the same crucible, subjected to the same annealing process. Their native dissimilarities are not, indeed, crushed out of them, but are all harmonised and overpowered by the pressure of one pervading and controlling element. They take different sides of a question, but they think in the same conventional style. They draw their information from the same *set* of organs, and look at the world through spectacles, different, indeed, in power and colour, but all proceeding from the same workshop. They are all conversant with, and insensibly moulded by, the gossip of the clubs; they all think much of the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews; they all listen anxiously to the language of The Times, and are not wholly without concern about the articles in the Morning Chronicle, the Morning Post, and the Daily News. But beyond these they seldom go. Opinions which find expression in none of these party and *London* organs they despise or ignore. *De non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.* The North British, the British Quarterly, the Westminster Reviews, the Leeds Mercury, the Manchester Guardian, wide as their circulation and great as their influence is among the miscellaneous and the middle classes, they seldom read, and regard little. Sentiments may be fermenting, and doctrines may be spreading for years, in the interior of the community, till they have modified the whole bent and character of the nation, and yet these men may have heard nothing of them till some such startling facts as the Birmingham Political Union, the Anti-Corn-Law League, or the Secession of the Free Church, break in



upon their apathetic slumbers, and enlarge the narrow and artificial boundaries of their knowledge. In spite of warning voices occasionally raised within their hearing, these denizens of the conventional political world of London and St. Stephen's remain wholly ignorant alike of the power, the feelings, and the intellect of the silent middle ranks; and would be amazed and somewhat alarmed if they could know the contempt and disgust which these often feel for the party manœuvres which occupy them, the trifles which absorb them, the blunders which disgrace them, and the infatuation which blinds them. The parliament, reformed as it is—further reformed as it may be—must enlarge its channels of information; the officials—improved in this respect though they are—must widen their basis, and open their sympathies far more than they have yet done, before they can know what the country expects from them, and can furnish them with the means of effecting.

There are sundry little customs which have, by the lapse of time, attained almost the rigidity of law, by which we contrive still further to aggravate the difficulty of finding and securing the ablest and fittest men for the public service. Some of these have grown up gradually and insensibly, and have descended to us from remote times; others have been adopted to guard against dangers which were real and imminent once, but which have long since passed away. Two, especially, require a passing notice, as they are almost yearly operating to our disadvantage, and not seldom to our actual suffering and danger. The first of these is the union in the person of the Lord Chancellor of the two functions of Keeper of the Great Seal, and Chief Judge in Equity. In the first quality, he is the principal adviser of the Sovereign, keeper of the royal conscience, patron of the church livings of the Crown, appointer of justices of the



peace, &c., superintendent-general of charities, guardian, in the king's name, of infants, idiots, and lunatics. In virtue of these functions, he is essentially a political officer, and as such, forms a part of the cabinet, and, rightly and necessarily, stands or falls with his ministerial colleagues. But, in his second capacity, he is the supreme judge in the most difficult, complicated, and laborious court of justice in the kingdom, exercising the most awfully arbitrary and extensive jurisdiction, discharging functions of which only the most exclusive attention, the most unremitting assiduity, the most continuous watchfulness, can approximate to an adequate performance. To enable him to do anything like justice to the hard duties thrust upon him, and to the numberless suitors, whose property, happiness, liberty, and sometimes life, are at his disposal, it would be necessary, not only that he should have nothing else to do, but that he should be permanent and irremovable, and that he should be appointed with a *sole* regard to his judicial capacity and his experience in equity practice. Yet, in contempt and seeming defiance of these obvious and universally admitted considerations, the two offices continue to be united in one person, to the unspeakable injury of both departments, one of which is continually sacrificed to the other. The consequences of this utterly indefensible arrangement are, *first*, That the ablest lawyers are at times unwilling to accept an office which, while it removes them from their former sphere of usefulness and emoluments, they may, perhaps, hold only for a few months, and then be subjected to eternal idleness and obscurity;—*secondly*, That causes in equity are often heard and reheard before four or five different chancellors, each of whom comes new and unprepared to the hearing; that as soon as a judge becomes experienced and competent, the chances are, that he is removed to make way for a successor, who has his busi-

ness to learn at the expense of the unhappy litigants who come before him ; and that the work, being more than any one man can possibly get through, accumulates and complicates, till the Court of Chancery has become an instrument of injustice, cruelty, and oppression, such as the Inquisition can only faintly imitate, and such as no European country, except England, can produce or could tolerate ;—and, *thirdly*, That lord chancellors are constantly appointed, who either are of no value to their colleagues or their country, as political advisers, or who, being chosen for their oratorical powers, or their parliamentary influence, are wholly unfit to preside over a court, requiring for its due conduct the rarest and loftiest legal qualifications. Cabinets generally choose the latter alternative, as the least evil to themselves, though immeasurably the greatest to the nation. Instances are not wanting. In the early part of the century, Lord Erskine was made chancellor, because he was a popular pleader, an eloquent speaker, and an ardent Whig, though he knew little of law, and was wholly ignorant of equity. In 1830, the same motives promoted Mr. Brougham to the Woolsack, much against his own will, it is said, although, while respectable as a common lawyer, he was utterly inexperienced in equity. Lord Cottenham, who made an excellent Chancery judge, was quite valueless as a political functionary ;—while his successor, again, a competent chief justice, but an inexperienced and incompetent chancellor, owed his appointment entirely to political considerations. An anomaly productive of so much oppression and misery, and admitting of no defence, will surely not be endured much longer.

The custom of requiring every member of parliament, who accepts ministerial office, to vacate his seat and submit himself to his constituents for re-election or rejection, is a fertile source of embarrassment and mischief.

At one time, undoubtedly, it was a wise and salutary precaution against the selection and retention by the Crown, of ministers who did not possess the confidence of the nation. It served, or might serve, to prevent the monarch from employing a commoner, at least, who was supposed to entertain designs against the liberties of the people. Now this danger no longer exists, and the precaution against it should cease likewise. No statesman condemned by, or unpopular with, the House of Commons, can now retain office a single day. The custom, moreover, is, we think, indefensible on the broad constitutional grounds of justice. It enables, not the nation, *but any one constituency*, to put a negative upon the indubitable right of the sovereign to choose his own servants. It enables any one constituency—and that perhaps the smallest, most ignorant, and most corrupt in the community—to dismiss or forbid the choice of a minister who may possess the confidence and admiration both of the monarch and the parliament. Before the Reform Bill, this evil and incongruity was not felt, because the nomination boroughs offered an easy mode of nullifying it. If a new minister was rejected by his former constituents, he was immediately elected for some government seat, which a subordinate vacated to make room for him, or a place was purchased for him by the outlay of 3000*l.* or 4000*l.* of his own or government money. Now, however, these arrangements are not so easy, and are not always practicable, and great inconvenience frequently arises in consequence. On one occasion, Lord John Russell was out of parliament for some weeks during the middle of session, to the great detriment of the public business, till the member for Stroud vacated on his behalf. Sir James Graham is the ablest administrator among our living statesmen, and is the man of all others, whom a large portion of the educated classes of the community would

most desire to see in power. But something in his manners, or something which perhaps we must designate as a certain want of nobleness and generosity of temper, makes him so personally unpopular, that, as we have already observed, he has scarcely ever sat twice for the same constituency, and if now appointed to office, might very possibly be returned by none. Indeed, if there be any truth in the rumour, that at the close of last year, the negotiations which Lord John Russell is known to have opened with Sir James Graham, Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. Cardwell, were rendered abortive because none of these gentlemen felt any confidence in their re-election, we may now trace the advent of a Tory ministry of unparalleled and dangerous incapacity, the risk arising from an interregnum and a general election at a crisis of great external confusion and uncertainty, and the nuisance of having to fight the battle of free-trade over again, to the operation of this absurd and antiquated custom. A long-established government has been upset, and has been obliged to resign its functions at a most critical moment into most alarming hands, because three constituencies — one insignificant, one notoriously bigoted, and a third notoriously corrupt — forbade it to call to its aid, and that of the country, three men of tried and eminent ability.

To point out existing evils is a far easier and less delicate task than to suggest a remedy. We well know how slowly and reluctantly the English mind admits a new idea, and with what distrust and distaste the public always turns from any recommendations which have the least air of science or system about them. Any attempt to modify or counteract the actual present tendencies of the nation — any scheme of amendment or of safety, however cautious, moderate, and wise, which cannot be introduced to public attention under the ægis

of a precedent—is almost certain to be suspiciously and ill received. Thousands who have gone along with us in our statement of the difficulties under which we labour, and of the dangers which threaten us from a defective supply of able public servants, and from the inherent unsuitability of the source from which they are chosen to supply precisely the *right sort* of men—will turn away prepossessed or hopeless, when we endeavour to point out the direction in which an alleviation of these difficulties and a guarantee against these dangers should be sought. Nevertheless we shall venture on a few suggestions, which, when they have lain long enough and been reproduced often enough before the public mind for their novelty to have worn off, may possibly meet with a dispassionate consideration.

In the first place, it would seem desirable that the House of Commons should if possible be restored to its original functions of an advising, representing, and controlling, but not governing body. This looks like a hopeless recommendation, and perhaps it is so. It is, as both our own history and the contemporary annals of continental nations show, an inherent tendency in popular legislative assemblies to encroach on the department of the executive, and gradually to draw to themselves all the powers of the state. We have sinned less than our continental neighbours in this respect, it is true, and perhaps their example may supply us with a timely warning; but for many years, and especially since 1832, our movement has been undeniably in this direction. And for a powerful body, voluntarily and from a sense of public benefit, to divest itself of functions and influence which it has usurped, would be an unheard-of forbearance. Still something may be done by making the public mind aware of the tendency, and convincing it that the tendency is ruinous. Now it is abundantly obvious, *first*, that actual *business* can never



be efficiently or promptly done by a committee or board of 658 members; and *secondly*, that by such usurpation of the ministerial functions the responsibility which should always cling as directly as possible to the *actors*, is in the first place shifted in a great measure from the ministers to parliament, and is in the latter body shared among so many, and in such various and unascertainable proportions, as to be virtually no responsibility at all. With these remarks, which we throw out for the national consideration, we leave this branch of the subject.

It cannot for a moment be imagined that the aggregate of the governing and guiding talent in the whole country has diminished, or that it is inadequate to any demands that can be made upon it. There probably never was a period in our history when capacity of every kind was as rife as now, when the general intelligence of the country was so cultivated in every department, or when all ranks could furnish forth so many minds fitted to bring them honour and to do them service. The difficulty we have to contend with—the first we have to meet—is not that the total national supply of administrative and legislative ability is less than formerly, but merely that it does not now, as formerly, instinctively congregate within the walls of parliament. Great Britain is still opulent, though St. Stephen's may have become impoverished and meagre. England we firmly believe to be as rich as ever in pilots who could weather every storm, in servants competent to any task, in statesmen fit to cope with any emergency. Two things only are needed to enlist all this floating and scattered genius in the service of the state:—that the Sovereign should be at liberty to select her instruments not from senators, orators, or noblemen alone, but from all ranks, descriptions, positions, and professions; and that she should be enabled to outbid



all other competitors for their talents—should be empowered to offer them such rewards as will command their willing and devoted labours, in the shape either of dignity, of emolument, or of that real power of efficient usefulness, which, to the purely ambitious and truly patriotic soul, is the sweetest and richest recompence which the world's treasury contains. A very simple arrangement would suffice. Empower the Queen to call to her councils all the administrative talent, all the statesmanlike wisdom of the country, in whatsoever rank it has appeared, in whatsoever channel it has displayed itself; and where the duties of the office, or the public service makes it necessary, let the royal selection *ipso facto* confer a seat, though not a vote, in parliament.

“The aristocratic class,” Mr. Carlyle observes, “from whom members of parliament can be elected, extends only to certain thousands: from these you are to choose your secretary, if a seat in parliament is the primary condition. But the general population is twenty-seven millions; from all sections of which you can choose, if the seat in parliament is not to be primary. Make it ultimate instead of primary—a last investiture, instead of a first indispensable condition—and the whole British nation, learned, unlearned, professional, practical, speculative, and miscellaneous, is at your disposal! In the lowest broad strata of the population, equally as in the highest and narrowest, are produced men of every kind of genius; man for man, your chance of genius is as good among the millions as among the units;—and class for class, what must it be! From all classes, not from certain hundreds as now, but from several millions, whatsoever man the gods had gifted with intellect and nobleness and power to help his country, could be chosen.”

A considerable proportion of those whom the Queen might thus select would probably be in parliament already: a certain proportion, also, would not really need to be in parliament at all. “Given, a good official man or secretary, he ought, as far as it is possible, to be left working in the silent state. No mortal can both

work, and do good talking in parliament, or out of it; the feat is as impossible as that of serving two hostile masters." But for those officials whom it was necessary to have in parliament, both to afford needful explanations, and to defend—as only those actually engaged can fully defend—the conduct and measures of the administration, *ex officio* seats should be provided. There really is no reasonable objection that we can divine to such an obvious and simple solution of the difficulty; nor have we ever heard any urged. Not being peers, they would of course have no votes in the House of Lords; not being elected by the people, they would of course have no votes in the House of Commons: the prerogative of neither House of Parliament would be in the slightest degree infringed. Her Majesty would simply be provided with an indispensable medium of communication with her "faithful Commons," and her "trusty and well-beloved cousins." But the proposition is not only indefeasibly reasonable: what is a consideration of far greater weight with John Bull, it is strictly according to, and *within* precedent.

The Queen can already, of her own free will, place any one she pleases in the House of Peers, *not only for a time, but for ever*, not only with the right of speech, but with the complete and entire privileges of the peerage. Our proposition does not go nearly this length: it gives the Queen no powers half so extensive as those she already wields. With regard to the House of Commons, it surely cannot be forgotten that up to the period of the first Reform Bill, the Crown possessed the power (with great additions) which we now propose to bestow upon it: there were a certain number of government boroughs, to the representation of which the Sovereign could at once nominate any minister she might please to appoint. In neither quarter, therefore, is our suggestion open to the charge of innovation.

The amendment would be strictly in conformity with the spirit of the constitution. It will still, as now, be in the power of either House of Parliament to declare its want of confidence in the administration, and in case of necessity to compel the Crown to change it, by withholding the necessary supplies. But it would enable the Queen to do that which the constitution of the realm declares to be her undoubted prerogative—viz., to select her own ministers—more effectually than at present: it would put it out of the power of any single capricious or sinister constituency to annul the appointment of the Crown, and it would no longer confine Her Majesty's choice within the narrow circle of those who are wealthy enough to adventure on a parliamentary career, ambitious enough to rush voluntarily into the popular arena, rich enough to buy a close borough, or hardy enough to contest an open one. It would carry out the intention of our fundamental statutes, and make this part of our boasted constitution a reality and not a sham.

But something more than this would be required. It can have escaped the attention of none who have long watched the management of public affairs in this country, that much mischief arises, and much more is permitted to continue, in consequence of the entire absorption of the time and strength of all our ministers with the daily and indispensable business of their several departments. Their whole energy is barely adequate to do what must be done, and to meet what must be met. Sufficient, and more than sufficient, to each day is the evil and the labour thereof. They are obliged to postpone and put aside everything that is not urgent and clamorous for attention. They are wholly without the leisure either of time or mind, to take a deliberate and comprehensive survey of the several changes or amendments which the public service *needs*, but does

not *demand*. They cannot dive deeply into the maladies of the nation, or the tendencies of the times. Not only can they not calmly and profoundly study what is for the public good, but they have scarcely even time carefully to examine the wisest schemes and the most beneficial proposals which are made to them. Thus all the rich suggestions with which official experience and insight must be laden are profitless, or nearly so, to them and to their country. They wait to propose what is needful, and to grapple with what is intolerable, till the nation discovers what their greater opportunities must have made known to them for years, and becomes so clamorous on the subject, as to render it the most important and pressing matter of the day. Then, and not till then, it is attended to. And then, being taken up under the influence of "pressure from without," it is too commonly dealt with ignorantly, hastily, and clumsily. Instances might be specified without number: we will confine ourselves to one. For many years our entire system of dealing with the criminal population has been in a position fitted to engage the most anxious attention of any wise and far-seeing statesman. Crime has been increasing, and the means of directly dealing with it have been diminishing. One or other branch of the subject has excited in its turn a partial and passing public interest, and *something* has been done, but done carelessly, unsystematically, and empirically. An outcry was raised against capital punishments; and capital punishments were virtually abolished. Much indignation was excited about the state of the prisons; and prison inspectors were appointed. The system of transportation was vehemently denounced; and the government proclaimed their determination to abandon it. Benevolent people declared that criminals should be regarded rather as unfortunate men who had been misled, and ought to be pitied and reformed, than as public

enemies and dangers against which the nation had to be protected; and, accordingly, the government have done their best to pet prisoners and "make them comfortable." Thus, the whole matter has got into an inextricable mess. We may not hang malefactors; we may not transport them; we may not even punish them with due severity at home. We may not make prisons the effective penitentiaries they ought to be, because the country would not bear the cost of its own maudlin tenderness for guilt, or because, at least, ministers think so, and, therefore, dare not apply to parliament for the necessary funds. Public and magisterial feeling shrinks from condemning infant criminals to the hardening and corrupting influence of adult gaols; yet, nothing is done to provide juvenile and reformatory ones, because the public has not demanded them, and we have no statesman to forestall what is not demanded. And we have thousands of our youthful population annually educated into crime as a most lucrative profession; yet we do not boldly stop this fertile source of suffering and perplexity, by taking them at once out of the hands of their educators, because we are not yet prepared to interfere with "the liberty of the subject," or to rescue children from parents who are training them for hell! The whole awful question—so momentous when looked at both from the moral and the political point of view—is suffered to drift on, waiting till it shall "resolve itself,"—because our ministers have neither strength, genius, nor leisure, for the discharge of real statesmanlike functions, and because we have not yet gathered to the service of the country the men qualified to supply their deficiencies.

A very simple remedy might be found by allowing to each of the chief officers of state a sort of unofficial council in the background, to assist and advise him in matters relating to his special department,—the mem-



bers of which, three or four in number, he would be at liberty to choose from any quarter and any class, and to remunerate in such a manner as to enable him to command the fittest minds the country could afford. Their functions should be to examine into the wants of the nation with a profoundness, and to deliberate on remedial measures with a care, which the routine and heavy duties of their chief make impossible for him ; to consider suggestions ; to prepare plans ; to regard permanent ameliorations rather than temporary expedients ; and generally to be to their principal a secret and reliable supply of that *statesmanship*, which is eminently needed, but which a life of incessant activity and antagonism effectually forbids. The country, duly searched, could furnish numbers of men, admirably fitted for such functions,—men aloof from and above the strife and turmoil of party ; thoroughly acquainted with the temper of the nation as well as with its wants ; with minds inured to labour, trained to political and historical investigations, and enriched by the studies of ancient and modern wisdom ; enlarged, sober, and philosophic ; and bringing to their task an independence of feeling, a comprehensiveness of view, and a passionless serenity of judgment, which those engaged in the rough warfare of the political arena can never attain.

We are glad to be able to confirm our views by those of a writer long engaged in official life himself, and accustomed to look beyond the claims and interests of the passing hour. Mr. Taylor says :—

“ Further, it is one business to do what must be done, another to devise and do what ought to be done. It is in the spirit of the British government as hitherto existing, to transact only the former business ; and the reform which it requires is to enlarge that spirit so as to include the latter. Of and from among those measures which are forced upon him, to choose that which will bring him the most credit with the least trouble, has



hitherto been the sole care of a statesman in office ; — and as a statesman's official establishment has been heretofore constituted, it is care enough for any man. Every day, every hour, has its exigencies, its immediate demands ; and he who has hardly time to eat his meals, cannot be expected to occupy himself in devising good for mankind.

“ I am aware that under popular institutions, there are many measures of exceeding advantage to the people, which it would be in vain for the minister to project until the people, or an influential portion of them, should become apprised of the advantage, and should ask for it ; many which can be carried only by overcoming resistance ; much resistance only to be overcome with the support of popular opinion and general solicitude for the object. And, looking no further, it might seem that what is not immediately called for by the public voice was not within the sphere of practical dealing. But I am also aware, that in the incalculable extent and multifarious nature of the public interests which lie open to the operations of a statesman in this country, one whose faculties should be adequate would find in every month he should devote to the search, measures of great value and magnitude, which time and thought only were wanting to render practicable.

“ He would find them—not certainly by shutting himself up in his closet, and inventing what had not been thought of before, —but by holding himself on the alert ; by listening with all his ears (and he should have many ears abroad in the world) for the suggestions of circumstances ; by *catching the first moment of public complaint against real evil, encouraging it, and turning it to account* ; — . . . Such means and projects will suggest themselves in abundance to one who meditates the good of mankind, ‘ sagacious of his quarry from afar,’ — but not to a minister whose whole soul is and must be in the notices of motions, and in the order-book of the House of Commons, and who has no one behind to prompt him to other enterprise, no closet or office-statesman for him to fall back upon as upon an inner mind.

“ This then is the great evil and want — that there is not within the pale of our government any adequately numerous body of efficient statesmen, some to be externally active and answer the demands of the day, others to be somewhat more

retired and meditative, in order that they may take thought for the morrow. How great the evil of this want is, it may require peculiar opportunities of observation fully to understand and feel; but one who with competent knowledge, should consider well the number and magnitude of those measures which are postponed for years or totally pretermitted, not for want of practicability, but for want of time and thought; one who should proceed with such knowledge to consider *the great means and appliances of wisdom which lie scattered through this intellectual country*, — squandered upon individual purposes, not for want of applicability to national ones, but for want of being brought together and directed; one who, surveying these things with a heart capable of a people's joys and sorrows, *their happy virtue or miserable guilt on these things dependent*, should duly estimate the abundant means unemployed and the exalted aims unaccomplished, — could not choose, I think, but say that there must be something fatally amiss in the very idea of statesmanship on which our administration is based, or that there must be some mortal apathy at what should be the very centre and seat of life in a country.

“Yet such is the prevalent insensibility to that which constitutes the real treasures and resources of the country — its serviceable and statesmanlike minds — and so far are men in power from searching the country through for such minds, or men in parliament from promoting or permitting the search, that I hardly know if that minister has existed in the present generation, who, if such a mind were casually presented to him, would not forego the use of it, rather than hazard a debate in the House of Commons upon an additional item in his estimates! Yet till the government of this country shall become a nucleus at which the best wisdom in the country contained shall be perpetually forming itself in deposit, it will be, except as regards the shuffling of power from hand to hand and class to class, little better than a government of fetches, shifts, and hand-to-mouth expedients.” — *The Statesman*, p. 156.

When the government has been thus empowered to call to its aid all the administrative and statesmanlike capacity of the country, it will be for the country to see that this capacity is so summoned to the rescue; that

no official indolence or jealousy, no aristocratic prepossessions, no shallow or shortsighted economy, shall prevent its being so summoned. Thenceforth it will be the nation's fault, if the nation be ill-governed, or governed by its narrower and scantier minds. Thenceforth we may hope to see the dawning of a new legislative and administrative era for our country. Of one thing we may feel quite secure — that if all the superior floating political genius of the country be not arrayed in the service of government, it will assuredly be arrayed against it ; if it be not obtained as a coadjutor and ally, it will make itself felt as an obstructor and antagonist ; if it be not allowed to strengthen the hands, to support the course, to prepare the measures of government, it will take the initiative and drag the government ignominiously in its train. This cannot be done without damage and without risk ; it is a dangerous thing for a nation to feel itself abler and wiser than its rulers ; reverence is impaired, obedience is undermined ; the character of public men sinks and suffers ; the language of public warfare becomes more bitter, more contemptuous, and more unmeasured ; the national strength is diminished, and the national influence weakened, because the people grudge great means to men in whom they do not feel full confidence. There are many indications that we are at present tending towards such a state of things ; perhaps the voice of warning may be heard in time.

The work by Mr. Roebuck which we have placed at the head of this article will not materially alter the estimate which the public has already formed of his abilities or of his character. It has evidently been composed with great care and diligence, and apparently with a sincere desire to give a faithful account of a most important era in our national history. The style, indeed, is rough

and uncouth, and rather that of a ready speaker than of a practised writer, but it is almost always clear. The characters which he draws of the principal actors of the time, appear to be the parts of the book on which he has bestowed most thought and pains; they are skilful, discriminating, and generally, we think, correct,—those of Mr. O'Connell and Sir Robert Peel especially so. Yet notwithstanding these merits, we have read the book with much disapproval and with sincere pain. It is not only deeply tinged, but is altogether coloured and pervaded, by Mr. Roebuck's besetting sin—a disposition to think ill and to speak harshly of every one around him. This tendency, whether arising from infirmity of temper or distorted vision, has greatly impaired his usefulness in public life, and will equally detract from his merits as an historian. Ever ready to put the worst construction upon ambiguous conduct; to speak with sarcastic doubt of every reported instance of purity and generosity; of all possible motives which could have influenced public men in a given course of action to assign the lowest as most probably the true one; unable apparently to believe in the existence of lofty and conscientious patriotism among statesmen, or conceiving himself to have the entire monopoly of this virtue,—he is about the most unpleasant companion in a historical journey that can be imagined. No man with any respect for himself or any tenderness for his fellow-men, likes to walk through the market-place, arm-in-arm with Diogenes and his lantern. The whole book is one continuous snarl, sarcasm, and sneer, delivered with the gravity and sternness of an ermined judge. It is a philippic delivered from the bench. In the guise of an elaborate history it is, in fact, a party pamphlet directed against the Whigs. Its object seems to be to show—the opinion of the writer certainly is—that the great Reform Bill brought forward by Lord Grey was a

mere hasty and improvised party move; that a real regard either for the people or the welfare of the country had no share whatever in inducing its proposal; that it was decided upon, concocted, and arranged with no purpose or idea but that of transferring the reins of government from the Tory to the Whig aristocracy; that all its details were planned for this end; and that none were more alarmed than the proposers of the measure, when they saw the earnestness of the great body of the nation in the matter.

"The Whigs have ever been an exclusive and aristocratic faction, though at times employing democratic principles and phrases as weapons of offence against their opponents. It is the fashion of the writers who advocate their cause and eulogise their party, to describe them as representing the principle of advance and change, in the hope of improvement, which must be ever acting with a people who are themselves continually improving; but this assumption is not justified by experience. *The Whigs employ the phrases of liberality upon compulsion.* They are liberal, because they need some means of exciting the nation. When out of office, they are demagogues; in power, they become exclusive oligarchs. In the one case and the other, they pursue without scruple what they believe to be their party interest. . . .

"*That the Whigs, as a party, sought more than their own party advantage, [in carrying the Reform Bill,] I see no reason to believe.* That they both overrated and underrated the effects of their own measure, their subsequent conduct, I think, proves. They overrated it, in supposing that they had really annihilated the political power of their opponents, and firmly established their own supremacy; they overrated it also, in fancying that they had given a dangerous power to what they called alternately a republican and a democratic party. They underrated the effect of the new Act, and mistook its influence altogether, when they supposed that the coming contests in the House of Commons were to be between themselves — representing monarchy, aristocracy, wealth, and order, on the one hand, and a small but fierce and active body of republicans and anarchists on the other." — Vol. ii. c. v.



Now, there is unquestionably much truth at the bottom of these representations; but it is a truth exaggerated and embittered. The Whigs have always been, it is true, an exclusive and aristocratic party; their basis has been narrow, and their views rigid, pedantic, and confined, and these defects are now working their downfall. But it is not true that they have generally been either selfish, ungenerous, or corrupt,—they have been steady champions of constitutional freedom, the bold denouncers of injustice and oppression, and the energetic friends of religious liberty. To many of them we owe much gratitude and deep respect. Lord Grey in particular, though we cannot approve of much of his early political conduct, though much of it he regretted and condemned himself, was yet a pure patriot and a noble statesman. Through a long life he held aloof from place and power, because they would not have enabled him to further the objects for whose sake alone he valued them. He lived to see the day when place and power were offered to him, and the terms which he was enabled to make were a people's emancipation. Nor, we confess, can we see the object to be gained by impressing on the minds of the nation the conviction that their rulers are selfish and cold-hearted intriguers; by sapping all reverence for public men, and encouraging the people to look upon them with enmity or with suspicion, or by inculcating, as the spirit in which statesmen should be judged and watched, a temper that thinketh much evil, and that covereth no sins.



## THE EXPECTED REFORM BILL.\*

As the season advances, the new measure of Parliamentary Reform, which Lord John Russell announced for the beginning of the session, begins to excite public attention. Conjectures as to what it will be, suggestions as to what it ought to be, have appeared in several journals, and been made at a few public meetings. While some have ventured to prophesy its chief features, and others have gone so far as to dictate its minute details, we shall content ourselves with a humbler function; and, assuming neither the right to prescribe, nor the power to foresee, shall simply attempt to clear the way for a fair and dispassionate consideration of the measure when it shall be propounded, by fixing the mind of the nation on the most prominent and turning points,—for instance, on the meaning of the British constitution, the object it has in view, the modifications already introduced in furtherance of that object, and the residue which yet remains to be accomplished. The effect of past alterations may guide us in our opinion of the necessity, and in our choice of the direction, of those now demanded or proposed; and the experience of our predecessors and our neighbours may be brought in aid of our own wisdom. From a consideration of these things we shall endeavour to infer what it would be wise to desire and reasonable to expect;—starting from a serious conviction that the subject is by no means as

\* From the "Edinburgh Review," Jan. 1852.

1. *Electoral Districts*. By ALEXANDER MACKAY, Esq. London: 1848.

2. *National Reform Association Tracts*. London: 1851.

easy, the treatment of it as simple, or the decision regarding it as obvious and indisputable, as many of our fellow-reformers delight to represent it.

The Reform Act of 1832, as every year will render more and more perceptible, effected a vast and radical alteration in the action, though not in the theory, of our constitution, and entailed changes of corresponding magnitude in the conduct of public affairs, and in the relations of the various elements of our complicated polity. These changes may be regarded as operating in a threefold direction:—

In the relation of parliament to the country and to legislation.

In the reciprocal relations of ministers and parliament.

In the functions and qualifications of ministers.

The immediate and most obvious effect of the Reform Bill was, for the first time, fully and fairly to bring to bear upon parliament the feelings and opinions—the prejudices and passions—the well or ill-understood interests of the country. The House of Commons became the *bonâ fide* representative, not indeed of the people, as that word is commonly and inaccurately used, but of that influential and educated portion of the members of the community which more properly deserves that name. It became, imperfectly it is true, but to a far greater extent than it had ever been before, not indeed the echo of the popular voice, but an instrument largely played upon by that voice wherever distinctly expressed. It was, indeed, not yet the nominee of the masses, but it ceased to be the nominee of the Whig or Tory aristocracy, and became the nominee of that combination of the upper and middle classes of which the constituencies are composed. Since the Reform Bill, the parliament has never tuned a deaf ear to the demands of public opinion:—it may have been sometimes in doubt as to the extent or unanimity of that opinion; it

may have been perplexed as to its precise meaning and demands; but it has never been chargeable either with careless inattention or sullen and dogged resistance. Some measure of the influence in this respect which has been exercised by the Reform Bill may be gathered by remembering that, while during the forty-six years which elapsed between the downfall of the coalition ministry in 1784 and the formation of Lord Grey's administration in 1830, the Whigs came into power only once, and then held office only for a single year,—of the twenty years which passed since, they have held office for sixteen. In addition to this, all parties have, as it were, been pushed on many steps in advance of their previous position. The Whigs have become more Radical, and the Tories more Whiggish than they were. Indeed, it would be more correct to say that the old boundary lines between the various sections of politicians have been swept away, and that they differ no longer in kind, but only in degree;—they are describable, not as the opponents or the advocates of progress, but as distinguished only by the rate of their progression, and the limits at which they respectively propose to stop.

But a still greater and more significant change has to be noticed. As parliament became more and more influenced by public opinion, and more sensitively and promptly responsive to popular sentiment;—as the country became more conscious of its power, and more cognisant of its direct action on the proceedings of the legislature, it was natural that its interest in those proceedings should increase. So long as its operation on the decision of great political questions was dubious, languid, and remote; so long as it felt that these matters were settled by a body, in the selection and control of which its voice was little more than nominal; there was comparatively small inducement, on the part

of men unconnected with public life, to acquire information, or form opinions, or propagate discussion, on such matters. So long as the question put before them at elections was, not—"What is your opinion upon this important measure?"—but, "Will you vote for the nominee of this or that great aristocratic party?" they naturally concerned themselves far more with men than with measures, and were likely to be influenced rather by considerations of personal interest or affection than of the public welfare. But in proportion as their power of influencing parliamentary decisions increased, their interest in these was enhanced, and the duty of qualifying themselves to form a sound judgment upon them became more obvious and pressing. Hence all Englishmen were on a sudden more completely and habitually transformed into politicians than at any period previous to 1382;—the middle ranks, because the real power of ultimate decision was placed in their hands,—the lower orders, because they perceived how closely their interests were affected by decisions over which they desired to have their share of control, and the control of which seemed to be now brought more visibly within their reach. Before the Reform Bill, parliament was the arena where, by the theory of the constitution, and with nominally closed doors, the affairs of the nation were discussed and settled;—it was the body to which the people delegated the task of thinking and acting for them in all political concerns;—having chosen their representatives, or ratified the choice of others, their political duty was at an end, their influence and interest in the matter ceased; or if any eccentric individual still had a fancy to watch and criticise the conduct of parliament or particular members, and pronounce judgment on specific operations, he did so as a work of amusement and supererogation. Within the walls of St. Stephen's the *élite* (by assumption and courtesy) of

the nation—men trained to the task by study and experience—nightly investigated and discussed those knotty and perplexing topics, and weighed those stupendous imperial interests, which mere common minds were not qualified to comprehend; and by means of this division and delegation of labour, the mass of the community were enabled to go about their own private concerns with security and undivided attention, leaving public affairs to their specially appointed guardians.

But now all this is changed. The alteration, which had begun before the Reform Bill, was hastened and consummated by the agitation and discussion attendant on that great national struggle, and has been becoming yearly stronger and more marked ever since. Parliament is no longer the only, nor the chief arena for political debate. Public meetings and the press are fast encroaching upon and superseding its originally exclusive functions. Every man has become a politician, and exercises his judgment far less upon the qualifications of the individual member whom he sends to the House of Commons to represent him, than upon the principle, bearing, and detail of the specific measures laid before that House. Nay, the change goes further even than this. The country often takes precedence of the legislature, both in the discussion and decision of public affairs. Public opinion is formed out of doors; and is only revised, ratified, and embodied within. Active and able individuals—sometimes men of business, sometimes philanthropists, sometimes theoretical economists—study some especial branch of political philosophy or social well-being, form their opinion upon it, arrange their arguments, collect their facts, promulgate their views, inform the public, agitate the country, excite, and at length get possession of, the press; and, when by these means the community at large has become sufficiently inoculated with their doctrine, they bring it



before parliament in the form of a specific proposition ; —and parliament examines, discusses, perhaps modifies, and retards, but never finally rejects, unless the popular feeling which has urged the measure so far forward should prove to be only a partial or transient phase of public opinion. The functions of parliament are no longer *initiatory* ; or in a far less degree than formerly. It has become too busy, too confused, too unphilosophical for that. The independent thinker originates ; the country listens, disputes, sifts, ripens ; the parliament revises and enacts. Like its synonyme, the old parliament of Paris, it has become a body in which *lots-de-justice* are perpetually held, to register the decrees, not of the sovereign prince, but of the sovereign people. Whether it is desirable that this should be so, may admit of doubt ; —the fact that it is so, admits of none.

A considerable change has also been wrought by the Reform Act in the character and general aspect of parliament, in consequence of the different class of men who are sent up, and the more efficient and vigilant control exercised over them by their several constituencies. It is very questionable whether the House of Commons comprises a greater amount than formerly of commanding genius or eminent wisdom. It may even be doubted whether the natural and necessary tendency of that measure, as of every measure which popularises the legislature, has not been to exclude one order of superior minds, and that the highest order. There is a class of men of refined tastes, of philosophic temper, of profound thought, of wide and comprehensive views, who, being capable of seeing all sides of a question, can adopt no side with that passionate and exclusive zeal which is demanded by its fanatical supporters ; who, penetrating too deeply the weaknesses, the selfishness, the blunders of every party, can attach themselves de-



votedly to none ; who, foreseeing more clearly and profoundly than their fellows the full and remote effects of every promising enactment on which the popular fancy may successively fix its affections, estimate each more justly, and by consequence, more moderately ; who know too well how surely excessive expectations lead to disappointment and reaction, to be able often to share the general enthusiasm ; who, gifted with too keen and subtle a discernment of "the soul of goodness in things evil," are regarded by the multitude as paradoxical, fantastic, and impracticable ; who cannot soil their lips by repeating the hollow or dishonest watchwords of the hour, nor stain their conscience by bearing a part in the violence and injustice which often mark periods of national excitement, nor bow their haughty honour to follow even their own banner through miry ways or to a tarnished victory. These are precisely the men a large infusion of whom in any legislative assembly is imperatively needed to elevate its character, to dignify its tone, to moderate its excesses, to counteract the tendencies, and control the impulses to which all such assemblies are naturally prone. Yet they are precisely the men whom popular constituencies can least appreciate, and by whom the sacrifices and concessions needed to please popular constituencies can least be endured.

Of this order of men, therefore, there would necessarily be fewer in a reformed parliament than under the old *régime*. It is probable, also, that there are fewer men of surpassing powers of any kind. But at the same time there is at least as great an aggregate and as high an average of talent. The level may not be higher, but there are many more who come up to it. There are more men of business, more men of competent capacity to enter into and discuss the merits of the various questions which come before them. There is less high

and commanding eloquence than formerly ; less also, perhaps, of lucid statement and masterly grasp of understanding ; but for one man who took a part in the debates of former times there are at least five who bear their share—and a creditable share—now.

Before the Reform Bill, members of parliament, with few exceptions, belonged to two classes ;—those to whom politics was a profession, hereditary or selected, —who entered public life as others enter the navy or the Church, feeling a special aptitude for it, either from character or circumstances, and resolved to devote themselves to it, and to sink or swim with its varying fortunes ;—and those who looked upon a seat in parliament as conferring a sort of titular dignity, implying a social distinction, and promising agreeable excitement, who eschewed all labour, who cared nothing for their constituents, thought little even of their own votes, and rarely felt any deep interest in the subjects that came before them for discussion. Parliamentary reform has nearly extinguished this class of senators, while it has introduced another of a widely different stamp. Many boroughs, especially those newly enfranchised, —and some counties, especially those in which industrial interests are influential, —rejected at once both the professional and the *dilettanti* politicians, and chose their representatives from among themselves, —men who had, perhaps, made themselves known and valued for local exertions, or who were distinguished among their fellow-citizens for their capacity in business, or their respectability of character ; who, perhaps, had little ambition, and no great liking for the office ; who quitted private life rather reluctantly than otherwise, and who went up to parliament simply to do their parliamentary duty, and retire as soon as it was done. The number of these men who were elected, —a number which has been steadily increasing, —when added to the

other influences of the time, completely altered the character of the House of Commons; it became a really working body,—a body, the severity of whose labours during the session is equalled probably by no other board, firm, or assembly. It is true that much time is habitually wasted, and that often little real work is actually performed; but this arises rather from the confusion incident to an excessive, multifarious, and ill-organised activity, than from indolence or negligence. The “men of business” who were sent up not only leavened the whole mass of members with their own energy and diligence, they were distinguished also,—not, we admit, by the comprehensiveness of their views, the soundness of their judgment, or the delicacy of their tact, but,—by qualities far rarer and almost novel in that House; by a tenacity of purpose, which was rebutted by no obstacles; by a directness of proceeding which often baffled the most experienced and diplomatic opposition; an unfeeling stubbornness, on which all blandishments were wasted; a rough hardhandedness, which tore away all flimsy pretexts, and exposed all hollow plausibility; and a certain pachydermatous insensibility, on which the delicate weapons of sarcasm and satire were tried in vain.

That a most valuable element has here been introduced, and that parliament has thus been made, in fact, to square more nearly with its ideal constitution, is not to be denied. But the change is one involving certain consequences which are not without their drawbacks, and, at all events, are too important to be overlooked. It behoves us fully to understand and appreciate them, in order to guard against their possible excess, or their noxious operation. The House of Commons, among other changes, has become far more of a general debating club. There is less of concert and co-operation than there used to be. Each member considers himself com-

petent, not merely to decide, but to propose; not merely to criticise, but to enunciate. Hence the history of each session is a catalogue of abortions: such an immense amount of amateur work is sketched out, that the necessary business of the country can scarcely be got through, and night after night is consumed in discussions which can lead to no practical result, and of which the benefit, if there be any, is distant, casual, and incidental. This, however, is an evil, which, as soon as it becomes excessive enough, will work its own cure; and we may therefore leave it to its natural corrective.

But there is another evil, of which the tendency is rather to increase than to diminish, and which all friends to representative institutions should watch with a vigilant and jealous eye. In proportion to the closeness of the connection between constituency and deputy, and to the directness of the control exercised by the former over the latter, will be the tendency of representation to degenerate into delegation; and in the degree in which it does so, it loses its special virtue and its healthy operation. It is not that delegation in itself is not an intelligible and consistent system; it is not that in some nations, and under certain conditions of society, it may not work safely and beneficially\*; but it is a system utterly unknown to the constitution of these realms. It cannot, however, be denied, that the tendency of the Reform Bill *lay in this direction*; and the shorter duration of parliament, and other measures on which the present class of Reformers insist so positively, would alarmingly aggravate that tendency. The very aim of these men is to render representatives more

\* It reached its complete ideal and its maximum of mischief in the old constitution of Hungary, where all measures were debated at the county sessions, and the delegates who were sent thence to the Central Diet, received special instructions, and were sworn to vote in accordance with them.

immediately dependent upon their constituents, and more promptly amenable to their control,—to make them a more close copy, a more sensitive barometer, of the varying feelings and wishes of the electors,—to reduce them, in a word, from the position of the select men of the nation, appointed to deliberate calmly on national interests, to that of mere organs and mouth-pieces of the popular will.

Now, every scheme having this change for its aim or effect we regard as wholly objectionable and mischievous ; and certain, if successful, to exercise a most fatal operation on the character, the dignity, and the true utility of parliaments. Any such change cannot but aggravate past cure the existing tendency in parliament to become mere courts of registration for the national decisions, instead of assemblies in which those decisions are formed. Constituents who regard and treat their members as “mere acoustic tubes, through which their commands are blown to the legislative chamber,” and who endeavour to reduce them to this disreputable level, must be content to be served by an inferior order of men. No man fit to be a *representative* will submit to be a delegate. He will not choose to perform a service which might be as adequately performed by a piece of parchment or a paid agent. He goes to parliament as an integral portion of the collective wisdom of the nation ; to consult with others how the welfare of the state may be best promoted ; and, if he is worthy of his high position, he will not allow himself to be degraded into the mirror and the medium of the shifting passions or the shallow caprices of any section of the people. It is impossible to disguise the truth that, from the tendency we have mentioned, as well as from other circumstances, the position of a member of parliament is becoming yearly less desirable. Not only is it one of incomparably severer labour than before the Reform Bill, but it is one



also of less dignity, less freedom, and less power. It is well that the idle loungers who formerly infested the House of Commons should no longer be tolerated. It is well, that from every one who goes there there should be exacted the faithful and diligent discharge of the duties of the station he has accepted. But it is *not* well, that, by rough bullying, by angry invective, by jealous and prying restlessness, by mean and low suspicions, the position should be rendered one which proud and high-minded men will not aspire to, which honourable men will not endure, which quiet and thoughtful men will shun. It is true that there will never be any lack of candidates for the office : old associations will cling to it for long years, and render it still an object of ambition ; and even after these have been extinguished, men with a certain rude competence will always be found to step forward into the arena and perform the thankless service. But the *right men* — the men whom the country for its own sake ought to seek out and send — will shrink back and turn, Coriolanus-like, away ; and their successors will be men of a lower range of capacity and with a less elevated estimate of a political career ; and the ultimate mischief will be far greater than it is possible to calculate beforehand. If the people wish to be honestly and ably served, they must be careful not to convert their service into one which no man with a due regard to his own character can undertake. In proportion as it is a service of responsibility and of toil, should it also be made one of dignity and honour. Otherwise, they may rely upon it, the connection will be sought by none but the servile, the incompetent, and the interested. “Gentlemen,” said Mr. Burke, “we must not be peevish with those who serve the people. Depend upon it, the lovers of freedom *will* be free. None will violate their conscience to please us, in order afterwards to discharge that conscience which they have



violated, by doing us faithful and affectionate service. If we degrade and deprave their minds by servility, it will be absurd to expect that they who are creeping and abject towards us, will ever be bold and incorruptible asserters of our rights against the most seducing and the most formidable of all powers. If, by a fair, indulgent, gentlemanly behaviour to our representatives, we do not give confidence to their minds, and a liberal scope to their understandings; if we do not permit our members to act upon a very enlarged view of things, we shall at length infallibly degrade our national representation into a confused and scuffling bustle of local agency."

The reciprocal relations of ministers and parliament, and the peculiar code of ministerial proprieties, have likewise undergone considerable modifications in consequence of the Reform Act; though these modifications have scarcely yet been generally admitted, nor do we remember to have ever seen them stated either by writers or by statesmen in the senate. They are various and important.

Before 1832 the House of Commons consisted, for the most part, of two great regiments, bearing specific names, carrying well-known banners, serving under recognised leaders, and representing the two powerful aristocratic interests which had up to that time divided the government between them. There were few denizens of the cross-benches; and those who sat there were regarded by the great majority as sad nuisances, though insignificant in influence and strength. They were considered impracticable, crotchety, and unimportant, — isolated and impotent individuals: while the section which now so unfairly arrogates to itself the title of the Party of the Country was not yet organised. Then, too, the questions which were discussed were

stirring, momentous, and well defined, and for the most part involved some great principle. The vote of every man was known beforehand; partly, because, as we have said, the matters at issue involved some decided principle, on which those who acted together could not well hold different opinions; and partly also because it was the recognised and universally admitted duty of every man *to vote with his set*, and to merge any peculiar and idiosyncratic fancies of his own in the great object of the triumph of his party. Now, on the contrary, these mighty questions of principle have been nearly all disposed of, or the principle has been conceded on all hands, and parties differ only as to the time and the extent of its application; and thus a wide field is unbarred for the admission of varieties and individualities of opinion. Both constituencies and ministers must be tolerant of open questions. All the great battles which formerly divided Whigs and Tories have been won. Parliamentary reform has been obtained; religious liberty has been won; peace and economy are the watch-words and professed objects of all parties alike. The topics and the measures now discussed, being of lesser magnitude and more limited range, and involving considerations rather of detail than of theory, and of expediency than of right, admit of far greater differences of view among colleagues, and of far greater freedom of individual action; and the *moral* cohesion of parties is in a great measure broken up. The party bond is also much weakened by the fact noticed above, of the closer union and more direct amenability of the representative to his constituents. This connection is now often stronger and closer than that between the member and his party; and the habit has thus been gradually introduced, to a degree unknown before, of deciding each question rather on its real merits than on its party or ministerial bearings. Moreover, the circumstances of

the great questions of principle having been disposed of, and freer scope being thus given for the exercise of private judgment; of new topics having come up on which comparatively few men were *committed*, or fettered by antecedent declarations; and of the Tory party having been beaten from their old positions, and thus compelled — unless they were prepared either to retire from public life, or to deny and resist *les faits accomplis* — to take up new ones far in advance; all served to familiarise the minds of public men with the idea of progress and of change.

The consequence of all these combined operations has been a most notable change in the standard of political morality. It has become at once sounder, more rational, and less conventional; and will be acknowledged to be purer and higher as soon as we can outgrow our old associations. Consistency is no longer the idolised virtue that it used to be; indeed, we are beginning to question whether, as it was formerly understood and practised, it was a virtue at all. A change of political opinions or parliamentary connections used to be regarded as damnatory and disgraceful, and was always attributed to sinister and dishonourable motives. And when, as we have said, clear principles were involved in nearly all public questions, and when those questions had been long — often for generations — under discussion, so that no one could be charitably conceived not to have made up his mind upon them, there was some excuse for this universal distrust of a change. The feeling had become almost instinctive. But now, when new questions come up for consideration, to which old axioms will not at all, or only partially apply; when men, agreed upon many points, find themselves at the same time divided by a conscientious difference upon others no less important; and when old party walls, both doctrinal and personal, have been so thoroughly

shaken and breached, it would be idle to regard the imputation of inconsistency and change as conveying any longer the reproach which once clung to it. Consistency means unswerving adherence to opinions, to party, or to principle. Fidelity to principle, — that is, to the cause of order, of freedom, of loyalty, of patriotism, — is what all public men lay claim to; and most of them, we believe, with justice, as far as their light extends. But it is clear that this fidelity, now at least, admits and often will demand the greatest variation both as to the measures which it may dictate, and the men with whom it may require us to act at different times. That consistency which lies in steady fidelity to high and wise aims, is a noble virtue: that consistency which lies in obstinate adherence to the same means and the same men, in spite of new knowledge, varying circumstances, and altered character, is a stupid blunder, an idle and disreputable boast. As one question passes away and gives place to its successor, it naturally and properly gives rise to new, and at first sight, perhaps, somewhat startling, combinations among leading politicians; yet if we consider the matter rightly, without any just imputation on their consistency and honour. Men, who were relentless foes while the subjects on which they differed occupied the first place in public interest, become, by the mere force of circumstances, friends and allies as soon as subjects on which they agree come uppermost, and become of paramount and engrossing moment. The antagonists of yesterday naturally become the colleagues of to-day; and will now be firm and faithful fellow-labourers just in proportion as they were honourable and irreconcilable antagonists before. The very same unflinching integrity, the very same fidelity to their convictions, which divided them hitherto, unites them now; and both the coalitions and the splittings-asunder among public men in recent years, which

are so often laid to the charge of inconsistency or personal and selfish interests, may be, and we believe generally are, the natural, the logical, the fit result of adherence to their own views, and a desire to promote those views, on topics which they regard as, at that time, the most prominent, pressing, and momentous. What should we have thought of statesmen in the Buonapartean wars, who agreed in their foreign policy and in their notions of the line of conduct to be pursued throughout the great crisis, and yet refused to act together, because they differed on the unborn questions of the Sugar Duties or the Jew Bill? or *continued* to act together after these matters had superseded the others? What judgment should we have pronounced on men who, in 1829, had refused to join with colleagues who agreed with them on Catholic Emancipation, but differed from them as to the Regency Bill or the African Squadron? Or how should we have condemned all hearty reformers, who, in 1832, had wrecked the prospects of the country by an aversion to coalesce with men who held discrepant opinions on the resumption of cash payments, which was a matter long gone by, or on the Corn Laws, which was a matter not yet come up? And, in like manner, what sentence should we now pronounce on public men who, agreeing on the vital question of free commercial policy, so paramount at present, should scruple or refuse to join their forces against the especial peril of the hour, because they differed on questions buried in the oblivion of the past, or hidden in the womb of the future.

If adherence *quand même* to former colleagues be not then *per se* a virtue, neither, assuredly, is adherence *quand même* to former opinions. If indeed a man could start on his course endowed with mature and perfect wisdom, possessed of a gift of forecast almost amounting to the primæval faculty of prophecy, he might be im-

mutable and consistent without danger. But such God-like capacity is not lavished on common mortals. Is there one in the course of centuries who can boast of such rare endowments? With the mass even of the most honest and highly gifted statesmen, political wisdom is the slow growth of years, the product of long experience, of wide and patient observation, of experiments tried and failed in, of blunders made, recognised, and profited by. Altered times, new circumstances, past errors, teach their own lessons. Political convulsions bring to light new dangers, and explode old theories; recluse philosophers investigate and perfect subtle sciences which overturn many venerable notions and time-honoured prejudices; and the minister who would be truly wise and suited to his generation, must hasten to learn all that new discoveries and reasonings can teach him, however they may shatter the antiquated knowledge of the past. How can a man be deemed fit to guide the fortunes of an empire, whose mind is not always open to hail any new light which can enlarge his conceptions or modify his doctrines? Yet how can any one, who keeps his mind thus conscientiously alive and open, dare to hope that he can escape having change after change, correction after correction, forced upon him? In times like ours — indeed in all times of progress — resolute adherence to old opinions in a statesman is equivalent to saying either, — “My principles are fixed: I will open my mind to no new light which can disturb the settled creed I have avowed;” or, “I will adhere to my old course, even though new knowledge or greater experience has convinced me it is wrong.” Which of these translations of our idolised consistency will entitle a politician to the confidence of his country? Or can we hesitate about transferring the imputed guilt, if guilt there must be, from the year of enlightenment to



the years of error which preceded it ? from the late recantation to the long persistence ?

The loosening of party ties, and the introduction into the House of the class of new men of whom we have already spoken, inured to no conventional routine, and trammelled by no antiquated notions of senatorial etiquette, have contributed, though perhaps unconsciously, to change the functions of parliament, and to modify its relations to the Ministers of the Crown. Since the Reform Bill, the House of Commons has followed the course which seems instinctive with all legislative assemblies, and, though without intention, has encroached on the province of the executive. Formerly, it was little more than a council for deciding on propositions submitted to it by the ministers, for controlling them if they showed a disposition to go astray from a constitutional and patriotic course, and for making them acquainted, through a legitimate channel, with the wants and feelings of the country. When the sovereign had appointed his ministers from the party which was for the time predominant in parliament, these ministers were omnipotent, within the limits of the Constitution, till parliament was ripe for demanding their dismissal. The independent members were powerless, and as it were non-existent, because few and isolated : the Opposition was what its name implies, — a body whose function was to grumble, criticise, and object — but who waited for actual measures till its turn of office came.

The initiative of all legislation, as well as the direction of national action, lay almost as much with the executive, as if it had been a constitutional maxim. Now, not only the Opposition, but independent members, originate measures, and interfere with every proceeding of the administration, to a degree formerly quite unknown. Ministerial bills, twenty years ago, used to be passed pretty much as they were introduced ; amend-

ments were scarcely ever carried, and were proposed chiefly as the formal mode of introducing a discussion. The Opposition, too, agreed upon the specific amendment which should be made their *cheval de bataille* against the government and its measure, and, when defeated, the struggle was over. But now, in addition to these principal *pièces de resistance*, a number of supplementary amendments and suggestions issue from the cross benches, or from individuals both on the Treasury and the Opposition side of the House,—all of which are sure of a respectful hearing, and some of which are not unfrequently carried by the aid of volunteers from all sections. Ministers can now no longer bring forward propositions embodying simply and distinctly their own private opinions, and rely upon the unanimous aid even of their own supporters to force them through the House: some portions have always to be modified to weaken the vehemence of the organised opposition; others, to neutralise the hostility of influential members of the independent section; others, again, to conciliate the fancies of individuals among their own party;—so that by the time the measures become laws, they are really, as well as nominally, the production of the parliament as well as of the executive. Nor can it with justice be maintained, that this representation holds good only of an incompetent and feeble ministry: it is not likely that we shall again see, except in rare and transient periods of crisis, an administration to whom it will not with more or less exactitude apply. The days of what are termed strong governments are probably wholly gone by. Parties are no longer as compact, as obedient, or as well disciplined as formerly. A minister who should endeavour to force his propositions through the House of Commons with the vehement despotism of Lord Chatham, or the cold and haughty arrogance of his son, would probably be driven from

power at the end of a single session, however decided may have been his original majority. Premiers of the old school, who should attempt to introduce into a reformed parliament the arbitrary stubbornness which was possible in the days of nomination and corruption, would soon be convinced that they had entered on a new arena, where ancient tactics were no longer suitable.

The effect of this change has been obviously to weaken the power of ministers, and in the same proportion to diminish their responsibility; for the two must always be correlative. A parliamentary majority which loyally obeyed the minister of the day as its first duty, might well throw upon him the entire responsibility of the measures which it carried, or the proceedings which it sanctioned, at his bidding. A minister of these days, whose measures are clipped and clogged by a legislative assembly over which he has no control, beyond such as his powers of reasoning or persuasion can exercise over the minds of each individual member, is fairly entitled to call upon that assembly to divide with him, in a most liberal proportion, the paternity of the bad measures so emasculated and *transmogrified*. To deny or to disregard the change which has been introduced in these respects,—to expect from a minister the same tenacious adherence to his own plans, the same impenetrable deafness to suggestions from allies, the same obstinate resistance to modifications by opponents, the same stubbornness in battle, the same conduct in defeat, which were suitable and practicable under the old *régime*,—is simply inconsiderate and unfair. Yet, from want of having realised and understood this change, how often do we hear the most inconsistent sentences of condemnation proceed from the mouths of the very same men! How often do we hear one minister blamed for his pliability, and another for his unyielding pertinacity! And how often do we hear the same minister inveighed

against, to-day for resigning in a pet because he is out-voted, and to-morrow for retaining office after he has ceased to command a majority!

This brings us to another change which has been insensibly wrought by the operation of the Reform Bill. The code of ministerial propriety in the matter of resignation has been greatly modified, though the nature and cause of the modification has never, so far as we know, been officially laid down, and is not generally appreciated, nor consistently remembered. So long as parliament was composed of two parties, distinctly defined, and systematically organised, arrayed under recognised leaders, and embodying all the available political opinion of the country, the duty of a minister when defeated was clear and indubitable. He was defeated because his opponents had become stronger than himself. He was left in a minority because his opponents commanded a majority. His constitutional course, therefore, was at once to resign his power into the hands of those opponents; and the same superiority which enabled them to defeat him, enabled them also, and required them, to step into his vacant place. But now, when a third and somewhat anomalous party has been formed, capable of holding the balance between the other two, and of determining the victory in favour of either; and still more, when affairs have become, as we fear they are now, still further complicated by the formation of a fourth section (the Irish party), which seems disposed often to hold itself aloof, and to act on altogether different principles,—the course to be pursued by a minister under defeat has been greatly modified and perplexed. The party of his habitual supporters may still be stronger than any other single section of the House, but not strong enough to outnumber all these sections, or two of them, united. He may be beaten, not by his principal antagonists and rivals, but

by the casual and transient junction of their forces with those of a third party, generally more hostile to them than to himself \*; to resign in such a case would be to throw the reins of government into the hands of a party even weaker than his own, and sure, therefore, to be speedily placed in a similar predicament. This, therefore, clearly cannot be the proper or constitutional course to adopt. The principle at issue is, however, the same as before; and the comprehension of this will greatly serve to elucidate our views. The duty of the minister, now as heretofore, is *to bow to the decision of the majority*; but to resign, in the case supposed, would *not* be to bow to this decision, but to thwart it; for the majority does not wish to supersede the government and to place its recognised competitors in office. The majority is a majority *pro hac vice* only: the House has expressed its will, not on the question of a change of ministry, nor on a question which is supposed to involve one,—*but simply on the special question then before it*;—the constitutional obligation, therefore, of bowing to the decision of the majority, is now confined to the adoption of the resolution come to by that special vote. The British constitution requires that the country shall be governed in conformity with the will of a parliamentary majority, and by the men whom that will maintains in power. For ministers to resign their power to a minority in parliament, is, in consequence, at once unconstitutional and futile; and now that parliament is divided into three parties instead of two, for defeat to be constantly followed by resignation, as it was formerly,

\* Precisely the same thing recently occurred in the French Chambers, where the ministers were beaten by the junction of their three mutually irreconcilable antagonists: they resigned in consequence; but it was impossible for the President to choose a new ministry from any one of the other sections, as they were all *minorities*, and minorities still smaller than the one they had defeated.



would soon render any stable government impossible. As long, therefore, as a minister is supported by a section of the House habitually and decidedly stronger than any other section, or than any two which habitually act together, it is his right, and probably his duty, to remain in office. It is for each individual minister to consider, according to the actual circumstances of the country, and the peculiar exigencies of the hour, how far repeated discomfitures may so far impair his influence, damage his reputation, and cripple his capacity for effective service, as to render his retirement at once desirable and patriotic. But it would clearly be both indecorous and oppressive were he to make use of his peculiar position, — except in those crises which bring their own duties, and teach their own lessons, and carry their own justification, — to coerce the independent section into the support of measures they regard as injurious, by the threat of throwing the government into the hands of a party whose possession of office they would consider as more injurious still.

Under this new and complicated position of affairs which has grown out of the Reform Bill, it is impossible to lay down any fixed rules. The code of morality and etiquette will be formed by degrees. Each case must be judged on its own merits. Each statesman must decide according to his own light, according to the measure of his patience, and the measure of his patriotism. All that we have endeavoured to make plain, is the injustice and impracticability of applying to a novel and altered state of things the formal precepts of an obsolete era; — that resignation *under* defeat may often be a clearer obligation than resignation in consequence of defeat; — and that it may frequently be the duty of ministers to embody and carry out the wishes of parliament, even when these wishes are not their own.

Simultaneously with a diminution in the power of



ministers and a division of their responsibility, has been a considerable increase in their labour. Official service, especially in the higher departments, is becoming more onerous every year; yet we know what Pitt and Castlereagh, and Canning found it, and how Peel felt under those precedents. As population and commerce have increased; as the interests of the empire have become more involved and complicated; as new subjects of attention have risen up, and new claims and duties have been forced upon the executive; as a higher political vitality, and habits of keener vigilance, have been diffused through the nation; the exertion and devotion demanded from ministers have been incalculably augmented. Their position is now one of severe, unremitting, and exhausting labour, such as the physical powers of few men can long sustain. Not only have they to do more, and to think of more, but they have to act far more cautiously, and to think far more profoundly, than was formerly found necessary. They have to act and think in the face of adversaries of more unsleeping vigilance, and far better information, than of old. They have to present a firm and invulnerable front to a greater number and variety of antagonists. They must make no blunders under the idea that they may possibly escape detection. They must be satisfied with no superficial comprehension of their subject, if they are not prepared to have their deficiencies mercilessly exposed. In a word, they have to act under far more effective and prompt responsibility than formerly. The result of all this is, that while more is exacted from them, they have less means than in old times of meeting these exactions. Their whole time and strength are taken up in despatching the incumbent business of the day, and defending themselves against the assaults of inveterate and omnipresent adversaries. They really have no leisure, either of time or mind, for that patient

investigation, that quiet reflection, that calm and comprehensive survey of a nation's wants, that deliberate penetration into its character and tendencies, from which alone the origination of great and wise measures of policy can spring. Yet such measures are clamorously demanded from them. Truly the public has become a hard and Egyptian taskmaster. It demands from its servants service, which at the same moment it deprives them of the means of rendering. It insists upon wisdom, and refuses leisure. It exacts perfection, and compels haste. It calls for schemes carefully concocted, thoroughly digested, armed at all points against hostile criticism,—and requires them at the hands of men whose life, by its own exactions, it has made one perpetual hurry, one distracting and exhausting strife. The evidence taken before the Official Salaries Committee of last session, presents a curious and instructive, but somewhat melancholy, contrast between the unanimous declaration of all who were or had been ministers, that they were cruelly over-worked, and that the public service suffered from the undue pressure, and the relentless determination of the self-accredited guardian of the public purse, to increase this pressure, and augment the mischief, by the abolition or amalgamation of those offices which, by their comparative leisure, were able to relieve and assist the inordinate toil of the others.

The plain truth is, that a reformed parliament now expects from ministers service which, under a reformed parliament, they cannot possibly render, and for the neglect or imperfect performance of which it is therefore unjust or irrational to blame them. If we expect the policy of ministers to be as wise, as profound, and as far-sighted as it ought to be; if we wish their schemes to be grandly conceived and perfectly wrought out, so that parliament shall have, as of old, no task

beyond that of deciding on their acceptation or rejection ; we must either allow them leisure to prepare these plans themselves, or instruments to do the work for them.

If something of this kind be not done—and there are various ways of doing it—it is to be feared that the tendency which has already set in will be greatly and dangerously enhanced : ministers will become more and more mere able and active *administrators* ; but the science of statesmanship, properly so called, will be lost to official life, and find its sole students and expositors in philosophic writers, who live apart from the current of affairs, and who, however sound in their principles and comprehensive in their vision, can rarely possess the experience or sagacity needed for the wise application of their views. The remedy might be sought in two directions—as to the respective advantages of which the opinions of practical men will probably differ widely :—either much of the routine and parliamentary work of the various departments might be devolved upon the under secretaries (whose number and powers should be proportionally augmented), so as to leave the chief minister at liberty for the higher offices of deliberate and forecasting statesmanship ; or each minister might be allowed a semi-official council of individuals chosen out of the community at large, and selected for their general wisdom and their knowledge of the branch of service to which they are attached,—who should have the dignity of privy councillors, and a fixed emolument,—and whose function it should be to examine all suggested schemes, to investigate national wants, to comprehend thoroughly the direction of public feeling ; and by their systematic studies, their grounded principles, their timely advice, to rescue statesmanship from that hand-to-mouth character which is now so frequently its just reproach. Our object in this Paper, however,

is less to propound plans than to trace those changes which reform has introduced into the functions and powers of ministers,—in virtue of which they can no longer supply what yet the country needs as much as ever.

Till now, it has been the almost invariable practice of our statesmen to propose no reform which the public did not call for, nor even then, unless the public had called for it a long time ; to remove no grievance which had not been heavy enough to excite a general outcry, and never to remove it till the outcry had become menacing and overpowering. This conservative and, in many respects, salutary habit—though much confirmed by the excessive and overwhelming toil which ministers have to encounter, and which leaves them no time or strength for works of supererogation—has its origin in the peculiarities of the English mind, and harmonises with the spirit of the British Constitution. There is much to be said in defence of it. Whatever exists, and has long existed, may plead more than mere prescription in its favour: the public mind is attuned to it ; the public temper has accommodated itself to it ; public ingenuity has adjusted its pressure and diluted its mischief. It is moreover very doubtful whether, in a constitution so practically democratic as ours, a statesman is called upon, or would be wise, to originate measures for which the nation has not shown itself fully ripe ; to propose organic ameliorations for which the nation sees no necessity ; or to abolish abuses from which it feels little practical inconvenience. So strong is the conservative element within us ; so averse are we to change, as change ; so potential is that *vis inertiae*, which is the main ingredient of political stability ; that a statesman who should thus anticipate national demands, forestall national feelings, and march in advance

of national requirements,—whose deep foresight and matured sagacity should induce him to propose in 1830 reforms for which the country did not perceive the necessity till 1850,—would step out of the range of sympathy of the people whom he governed, and would, *ipso facto*, become powerless. His very superiority of wisdom would defeat and dethrone him. It is only through the people themselves that popular reforms can be effected. It is only by preparation of the national mind that national progress can be achieved. Were it otherwise, our advance might perhaps sometimes be more rapid, but would assuredly not be so steady. We should fluctuate and retrograde. We should do and undo. A step once gained would not, as now, be gained for ever. We should often have misgivings and reactions, and should from time to time be harking back upon our course. What the nation had not long desired, it might not be resolute to retain. What it had not valued enough to demand, it would not value enough to defend. Reform, like freedom, is secure only where it is gained—not where it is given.

Of course there is evil as well as good in this mode of proceeding. On the other hand, abuses retained till public indignation has acquired vehemence enough to sweep them away like a torrent, will have accumulated round them a needless degree of animosity, so that, when they are abolished, they may be abolished with too great a disregard for vested interests and feelings. Reforms, delayed till long postponement or refusal had exasperated the public desire into a passion, are apt to be carried in a tumult of popular excitement, which leaves little leisure for the cool and deliberate consideration of details and consequences. If statesmen proclaim to the world, as their principle of action, that no changes, though confessedly desirable, will be yielded till the voice of the country has pronounced itself upon

them in a manner not to be mistaken, they are offering a most tempting premium to that popular agitation which, both in England and in Ireland, has already become a sore evil and a serious danger.

Undoubtedly in this as in most other matters, there is a middle course in which true wisdom and safety may be found. The right rule must be for statesmen not to shoot over the heads of the people, or run too far ahead of their consolidated feelings and matured opinions,—but, while preparing the public mind by their speeches and writings, and gradually educating it up to the required standard, to abstain from action till the intelligent part of the community are in full harmony with their views: Yet, on the other hand they must be even more careful not to delay till wishes have become impatience, and till the mass of the people have begun to mingle their angry clamours with the demands of the educated classes. The rule is easy enough to lay down; the difficulty begins when we attempt to apply it.

One of the rarest and most difficult, yet at the same time one of the most necessary, qualifications of a statesman in a popular government like that of Great Britain, is the faculty of discerning what THE NATION really desires and thinks; of distinguishing between the intelligent and unintelligent public opinion,—between the orators and the organs that have *weight*, and those that have none,—between the voice which is influential, and the voice which is only loud—in a word, between that popular *pronunciamento* which it would be weakness and wickedness to listen to, and that which it would be unpardonable to disregard, and idle to dream of opposing. The task demands no little care and no ordinary tact; it belongs to a sagacity partaking of the character of an instinct which some men of very moderate genius have in perfection, of which others of far



loftier intellects are entirely destitute. It requires singular accuracy of judgment and acuteness of perception; a practical acquaintance with every rank and class of the community, or that intuitive insight which with some men appears to supply its place; and a mental ear so fine, sensitive, and subtle, as to be able (so to speak) to hear the language of the silent as well as that of the outspoken and the noisy, and to discriminate between the tones of resolute earnestness, and those of mere bustling loquacity. In no branch of his profession is a statesman, devoid of this unerring and peculiar instinct, more likely to be mistaken; in none is a mistake more mischievous. He is for ever steering between two dangers: that of opposing a stolid and insensible defiance to the real and serious demands of the popular will; and that of yielding a weak obedience to the noisy outcries of a worthless, insignificant, and powerless few, and incurring thereby the infinite disgust of the influential but silent and contented mass.

In the present case we do not think there can be much mistake about the matter. There clearly is no *call* for parliamentary reform on the part of any large or influential class. There is no zeal about it, one way or the other. An extension of the franchise is wished for by some, and thought proper and desirable by many; but it is not an actual want largely felt, nor is the deprivation of the franchise a practical grievance, clear enough, tangible enough, generally recognised enough, to have given rise to a genuine, spontaneous, extensive demand for redress. There is a general languor and want of interest on the subject, manifested nowhere more plainly than in the tone and character of the meetings got up by the Reform Association for the sake of arousing public feeling. The nation, as a whole, is undeniably indifferent; the agitation is clearly artificial. It is notorious, as we shall soon have occasion

to show in detail, how few of the ten-pound householders have taken the necessary steps to place themselves upon the register by paying their own rates, by securing a sufficient length of residence, and maintaining their claims before the revising barrister, and how few of those registered took the trouble at the last election to record their votes. The Freehold Land Societies alone show some electoral activity; but here an investment for their savings is in view, as well as the franchise. A remodelling of the franchise (magnified into a new Reform Bill) has been promised by the ministry; a general election is near at hand; active, energetic, and experienced agitators are doing their utmost to arouse the country from its torpor; but in vain. A universal, genuine, unmistakeable expression of public interest in the matter, or of earnest desire for an amendment and extension of the suffrage, they find themselves utterly unable to elicit.

Now, whether this general indifference is to be regarded as indicating a favourable or unfavourable state of things for a reconsideration and extension of the suffrage, is a question which will be answered by every man one way or another, according to the view which he takes of parliamentary and ministerial obligations. If the legislature is to be confined to the function of discerning, embodying, putting into shape, and carrying into effect the deliberate decisions of the nation, then parliament would be clearly premature in moving in a matter of such vital moment as organic change, since the nation has not summoned it to action, and has enunciated no opinion as to the extent and direction of that action. *Quieta non movere* is, in political affairs, as often a maxim of wisdom as of laziness. And when so many serious and crying practical grievances are clamorous for reform; when the principles of taxation

are still only half thought out ; when its practice is a jumble of empirical expedients and indefensible incongruities, in which old notions and new are forced into a strange and unassimilating juxtaposition, but in which no clear paramount conception, no pervading and master idea can be discerned ; when our colonial relations have all to be discussed, consolidated, and readjusted ; when we have only just entered on the vast enterprise of Law Reform — an undertaking demanding the most concentrated strength, labour, and devotion ; — then, to rush into the disputed field of Franchise Alteration, — to open a question which cannot fail to absorb much time, to complicate political relations, to split parties and to sever friends, to distract, divide, and fritter away the reforming energy of the nation, and to dissipate that vigour which can only be effective by being concentrated, — does seem, at first sight, like the supererogatory zeal of men who begin to build without counting the cost, and go forth to meet their adversary without previously measuring their strength.

But, on the other hand, if gradual amendment and extension be the law and essence of our constitution ; if one of its chief merits lies in its elastic adaptability to advancing requirements and riper developments of character ; if it be a tacit fundamental principle that the suffrage should be coextensive with the fitness to exercise it ; and if the mental and moral progress of the nation, therefore, logically draws after it the enlargement of the franchise, then it is probable that no times are so suitable for the widening of our electoral basis as those in which no impatient excitement is in being to hurry deliberation or embarrass action, — in which legislative wisdom, not popular passion, points the direction and assigns the limits of the change. And if advantage be taken of the quiescent attitude of the public mind to look deeply and consider cautiously, — to

examine the subject from a higher and broader point of view than party men can often attain to, and to regard this or that measure or suggestion, not as it affects present political relations, but as it bears upon permanent national development,—to discuss the question less as senators and politicians than as statesmen and philosophers,—then, indeed, the general silence and indifference may powerfully aid us in facilitating a wide and profound consideration, and in coming to a sound conclusion. But the measures to be proposed must stand upon their own merits alone: there is no popular cry or fancy, by falling in with which they can borrow artificial strength; there is no popular excitement which can carry a crude or unworthy scheme to unmerited success. Those who undertake the responsibility of initiating the new Reform Bill will do well to remember that, as there will be no enthusiasm in its favour, but much certain opposition, its only chance of success will depend on its being so judiciously constructed and so fully weighed as to command the suffrages of the moderate and thoughtful of all classes. If, indeed, a measure were proposed so wide and wild as nearly to embrace the Charter in its amplitude, a large army of zealous and energetic supporters would be enlisted in its defence; but such support would be dearly purchased and more than counterbalanced by the falling away of the more cautious, reflective, and conservative reformers, and by the augmented and better based hostility of the Tory opposition. A proposal which united the Chartist in its behalf would unite all other sections of the community against it; and such no Whig ministry would dream of bringing forward. Anything short of this will be assailed by the Protectionists as dangerous, and by the Radicals as inadequate and not worth fighting for; and it must, therefore, if it is to be carried, be

such as will stand the brunt of all reasonable criticism ; as will approve itself to the understanding of every one who has any claim to the title of Reformer ; as will, in a word, fight its way to victory by virtue of its undeniable excellence and intrinsic recommendations only. As it cannot hope for triumph by an appeal to popular excitement, it must seek that triumph by satisfying the deliberate wisdom of the legislature.

Those who compare the state of public feeling on the subject of parliamentary reform *now* with what it was in 1830, will admit that the two epochs present no similarity whatever. Then it had been before the country for a long series of years as a question of primary magnitude and interest, — as *the* one measure which was the necessary key and prelude to all others. It had been the *cheval de bataille* of that great party in the state with which all popular hopes and feelings were identified. It was the project, the creed, the banner of those who for generations had fought the battle of freedom, mercy, and justice. It had been the field on which the great contest between the friends of progress and the friends of stagnation was to be brought to issue. It was the one thing needful. With parliamentary reform every subsequent achievement would be easy : without it, all further amelioration would be hopeless. With rotten boroughs would fall every intolerable abuse and every cruel grievance which had been perpetuated through their instrumentality. With the enfranchisement of the great towns and the middle classes would be ushered in a new reign of right and progress. *Now* experience has somewhat damped the enthusiasm with which the battle of reform was fought, and disappointed several of the brilliant expectations which were formed from the victory then won. Further electoral changes have become less generally interesting as they are seen to be less imperatively needed, and as

the operation of them has become more questionable and uncertain. People have become more disposed to use their tools than to sharpen them, or multiply them, or change them. It has become obvious that many practical enterprises call for completion, and many pressing grievances for cure, which are far more essential than any electoral amendments. It has become obvious that administrative reforms are far more needed than organic changes. It has become obvious also, that, incomplete and theoretically imperfect as our actual franchise is, parliament yet does, in fact, respond, with very great sympathy and promptitude, to the ascertained wishes of the country, and that nearly all retrenchments and ameliorations which are desirable and *desired*, can be obtained through the instrumentality of the House of Commons even as at present chosen. An extension of the suffrage, therefore, which in 1830 was the question of questions — almost the sole question, in fact, — is now only one of many, and one by no means of the first magnitude or of the most indispensable and paramount importance. It no longer occupies the same space in the public mind that it then did and deserved to do. It has descended from being the demand of the nation, to be the programme and watchword of a section.

Moreover, in 1830 the people knew what they wanted ; now they seem to have no definite or united aim. *Then* reformers, comparatively speaking, were agreed as to their wishes and their claims: *now* they are split into a number of parties, and differ as widely as antagonists in the nature and extent of their demands. Then, they sought the removal of an intolerable and deeply-felt evil, — the conferring of a vast and clear practical boon. Now, what they desire is rather the rectification of a theoretical injustice, the removal of a disfiguring blemish, the satisfying of a natural desire. Hence, in 1830 they



struggled, as Englishmen will do, with immense resolution and pertinacity for a manifest and tangible good. Hence, in 1851, they regard, as Englishmen will do, with lukewarmness and languor, the contest for retouching an imperfect but still admirable system. They are somewhat bewildered, too, by the multiplicity of conflicting schemes, and look shyly on the movements of an army so divided against itself as is that of parliamentary reformers now. They distrust the recommendations of men who cannot agree among themselves what to recommend, and are inclined to postpone for the present the consideration of plans which have assumed neither the defined shape nor the unity with which it is possible to deal. A ten-pound county qualification, household suffrage, complete suffrage, manhood suffrage, universal suffrage, (to say nothing of more complex schemes)—all contending for public approval,—leave upon the matter-of-fact mind of a Briton an undefined impression that the contest regards rather a speculative principle than an actual claim of justice or national advantage.

Then, again, the ranks of parliamentary reformers are strangely altered and weakened since 1830. At that time all Liberals were in favour of an extension of the suffrage. They differed somewhat as to the degree of that extension, but all agreed that a large one was not only desirable, but was imperatively called for. The bill brought forward by Lord Grey's ministry united every reformer in the country in its behalf. What Reform Bill would do so now? At present there are many undoubted Liberals—true friends to freedom—zealous labourers in the ranks of practical reforms—advanced pioneers in the path of progress—who deprecate any further extension of the franchise; many who doubt the wisdom of it *yet*; many who will oppose it with the utmost weight of their character and talents.

Numbers who were innovators then, are Conservatives now: not that any change has passed over their sentiments; but they have got what they aimed at; they have pushed progress as far as they thought desirable; to use their own metaphor, they have dragged the state coach into the middle of the road out of one ditch, and see no necessity for upsetting it into the other. This change of position and feelings is inevitable. Every victory gained augments the number of the satisfied; every reform conceded thins the ranks of the reformers; every abuse remedied diminishes the enemies of the existing order of things. The men, too, who thus successively pass over into the camp of the Conservatives are not the least considerable among the army they have quitted; they are the cautious, the moderate, the reasonable: those who give weight and dignity to the party of progress in the eyes of the world, and win for it respect and deference even in the sight of its antagonists. Numbers of these men, who gave to the reformers their overwhelming strength and high character in 1830, have now carried that strength and character to the side of their former opponents.

But the difference of feeling on the subject of parliamentary reform between those days and these, is as nothing when compared with the difference of circumstances. A long course of continued amelioration, our inveterate habit of grumbling, and a universal disposition to depreciate the value of what has been obtained, and to exaggerate the value of what has been refused, have combined to blind us to the enormous contrast between the state of things immediately preceding the Great Reform Bill, and their state now, when that measure has been operating and bearing fruit for twenty years. Then, nearly everything had to be done; now, most of the great things have been accomplished. Then, the very tools and materials were

wanting; now, the building is more than half completed. What were distant desiderata then, have passed into history as achievements now. What were *facienda* then, are now *facta*. In 1828, which we may take as the last year of the firm old Tory dominion, the claims of religious liberty which the greatest statesmen of all parties had joined in advocating, were still denied. At least ten millions of Romanists and Dissenters were debarred from the exercise of their civil rights. The Catholic Emancipation Act was not yet passed. The Test and Corporation Acts were not yet repealed. Now, men of every shade and sect of Christianity are on an equal footing in the eye of the law, and the same equality is on the point of being extended to the Jews. In 1828 the Civil List was extravagant and indefensible, and the Pension List lavish, unchecked, and by no means unstained by corrupt influence. Now, both have been so reduced, purified, and re-arranged, that no abuse can possibly creep in. In 1828 the representation was simply a mockery. It bore the stamp of an age and of circumstances which had long passed away. The aristocracy and the government returned a large majority of the House of Commons. Old ruins sent their two members to parliament. Vast cities bursting with affluence, vivid with enterprise, radiant with intelligence, had no representatives. A vast proportion of the middle classes, whose united wealth could have bought up all the peerage, and whose talents and achievements might well put it to shame, was excluded from the franchise, which *en revanche* was lavished upon thousands of the lowest and most venal of the population. Seats and votes were openly bartered and sold; and every election was a saturnalia of license and corruption. Parliament sat aloof and secure; independent and careless of its clients and creators; turning a deaf ear to any remonstrance that spoke in

tones less loud than a rebellion ; cherishing every abuse that did not threaten to breed an insurrection.

Look at the change now. Aristocratic influence on the construction of the Lower House is not abolished—probably it never can be—but it is reduced within far narrower limits. And though the late disclosures at St. Albans, and the evidence of Mr. Coppock, forbid us to suppose that anything like the same impression has been yet made on the inveterate habit of bribery, we trust that its worst days are over. An inquiry, such as that at St. Albans, will have shown that parliament is in earnest : the parties themselves must be deterred by being subject to examination under the new Evidence Bill ; and public opinion is gathering strength, and speaking more intelligibly, year by year ; so that other remedies may at last be found effectual against these the most crying evils of our small boroughs,—bribery and intimidation,—short of the popular panacea of numbers and the ballot. Elections are finished at present in a day, with little more excitement or disturbance generally than attends a public meeting or a vestry contest. Every householder among the middle classes has a vote, unless he chooses voluntarily to forego it ; and many of the more deserving of the lower classes—though confessedly fewer than is desirable—are on the register. The middle classes, in fact, now return nearly all the borough members, and a considerable portion of the county members also. The voice of the country is deferentially listened to in parliament ; its feelings anxiously interrogated ; its remonstrances and representations received almost with submission. If parliament delays a measure, it is to give the country time to make up its own mind : if it refuses a popular demand, it is because the people are not agreed upon the question. However it be got together, it cannot be denied that the House of Com-

mons is now, on the whole, a faithful representative and servant of the intelligence and influence of the country. It is no longer the nominee of the great: it is not yet the nominee of mobs.

Then, in 1828 the corporations were scenes of the grossest jobbing and the most unrestrained misgovernment; now, the management of them is almost everywhere in the hands of the tax-paying classes, and often of the humblest portion of those classes. Ten-pound householders, shopkeepers, and small tradesmen are almost omnipotent now in municipal elections. Whatever of mal-administration is at present to be charged upon them, is the doing of the people themselves.—In 1828, the masses were ground down by the most unfair and oppressive taxation. Every year since the Reform Bill has seen taxation more and more taken from the shoulders of the poor and laid upon those of the rich, till it has become very questionable whether the limits of justice and policy have not been overstepped in the opposite direction. In 1828, the education of the people had been wholly neglected by the state, and left to the zeal of private individuals. Now, a quarter of a million yearly is voted in support of a system which, though by no means perfect, is becoming undeniably and increasingly more reasonable and effective. In 1828, industry was tampered with in every conceivable mode; and the food of the masses was curtailed in quantity and enhanced in price by one of the most partial and oppressive enactments ever endured in patience by a free and thinking people. Now, commerce and manufactures are set wholly free, and all restrictions on the importation of food are entirely swept away. And the result is that industry has never been so flourishing, and the people never so well off as now. The employments of the working classes have been sedulously examined, with a view to render them less

severe and more healthy; in some branches of labour the hours of work have been reduced; in others, regulations favouring the operatives have been enforced; and our whole legislation has been marked by a zealous and conscientious attention to their welfare—not the less genuine because sometimes misdirected and unwisely shown.

Now all these things are due, beyond contradiction, directly or indirectly, to the Reform Bill of 1832. The objects for which that great enactment was desired are for the most part accomplished. Nearly every demand sternly urged at that time has been already granted; nearly every abuse then rampant, has been already rectified or abated; nearly every want then experienced has already been supplied. The arguments, therefore, which were cogent and unanswerable then, are disarmed and powerless now. All the great battles have been fought. All the great victories have been won. All the more stupendous works have been achieved. All the more formidable difficulties have been surmounted. And the reflecting portion of the people naturally feel that the instruments which have accomplished the harder tasks and conquered the mightier antagonists, must surely suffice for the minor and easier enterprises which remain.

The essential difference, then, between the condition of the representation in 1830 and in 1851, would appear to resolve itself into this: that whereas formerly hundreds of thousands were destitute of the franchise, whose exclusion was a positive hindrance to good government and an actual injury to the community, *now*, the exclusion affects only a certain number whom it would be most desirable to include, and a far larger number whom, on principle, it is conceived that it is unfair to exclude. Reform was demanded in 1830, in order that notorious abuses might be rectified, that a



just and beneficial administration of public affairs might be enforced: it is demanded now, in order that our representative system may be adjusted on a more perfect and more defensible plan. It was demanded in the name of practice then: it is demanded in the name of theory now.

"Not so" (say the leaders of the Reform Association); "there are still existing abuses which only a far wider franchise will remove; grievances, which only an extended basis of representation will redress; reforms, needed by the people, but opposed by the vested interests of the great, which only a remodelling of electoral divisions will enable us to obtain. Things are not done which would be done if the people had the choice of the House of Commons really in their own hands: and things are done tardily and imperfectly which would then be done thoroughly and in time. A new Reform Bill is required, not merely to remedy an eye-sore, to complete a picture, to elaborate and polish up a rough and angular system, to remove plausible grounds of discontent, but to obtain most real and most needed boons." We believe this to be a mistake. Admitting at once that many evils still remain to be remedied, and many ameliorations to be effected, which the public good requires, we think it is not difficult to show that the real obstacles in the way of the desirable enactments, lie, not in the restricted basis of the representation, but in the fact that either the nation has not made up its mind as to their desirability, or that the objects aimed at lie beyond the reach of parliamentary omnipotence; which is far more limited, both for good and evil, than popular leaders like to admit. Regarded as means towards an end, good government, — and few wise men value them otherwise — an extended franchise, household suffrage, "complete suffrage," "manhood suffrage," the six points of the Charter, are neither necessary for the attainment

of that end, nor yet the shortest way to its attainment. The end is more accessible than the means: half the time and half the labour that would be spent in procuring new tools, would suffice to accomplish the object with the tools we have. For what are the measures which the organic reformers have in view, and for the accomplishment of which they deem a vast popularisation of the legislature indispensable? Are they not a frugal expenditure of the public money, equitable taxation, cheap and prompt justice, unfettered freedom of industry, the abolition of unjust and barbarous laws, the protection of the rural population against the abusive temptations of the game laws, and gratuitous, or at least easily accessible, education? If they have any other aims more sinister and less fair than these, they do not avow them, and we therefore need not insinuate or discuss them. Now it is abundantly clear, that measures embodying all these great objects may be obtained from the House of Commons, *as now constituted*, in half the time that it would take to extort from it "complete suffrage," which, when extorted, would after all be only the first step towards these legislative measures. For let us remember that no measure of retrenchment, education, financial or administrative reform, will so divide Reformers, and so unite Conservatives, as "complete suffrage," or the charter. No measure of practical good will combine so small a body in its favour, or will concentrate against it so numerous, so powerful, so resolute an opposition. Hundreds of thousands of the middle and upper classes, who would join the Chartists in a firm demand for economical expenditure and a revised taxation, would join the Tories in opposing the charter, or any franchise-measure which resembled it. The self-government of our colonies; the strict revision of our public expenditure; the reduction of our army and navy estimates to the lowest point

consistent with national safety; the equalisation of imposts; the extension of the legacy and probate duties to landed property; national education; and a juster law between landlord and tenant;—all these would be conceded in a single session, if the whole of the unenfranchised classes were to join that large majority of the middle classes, who are now favourable to these changes, in demanding them. No legislature and no government could resist, or would dream of resisting, claims so reasonable and so backed. But against the charter or any cognate scheme, the government, the legislature, the upper classes, and a very large proportion of the middle classes, would fight with the determined resolution of men who felt (rightly or not) that they had sense and justice on their side; and that they were struggling, not for their own privileges, but for the honour and welfare of their country. And in this vain, useless, and exasperating contest would be wasted all those years which, properly employed, would have given the Chartists *their ends but not their means*; would have sufficed to remove every removable grievance, and to confer every boon within the reach of legislation.

Let us lay well to heart the history of the Anti-Corn-Law Agitation, for it conveys a wise and wholesome moral. No popular movement was ever so pregnant with encouragement and instruction. It commenced with a few thoughtful, searching, practical, educated men, whose views expanded and matured as they went along. It trusted to the spread of information, the weight of argument, and the confirming lessons of experience alone. It gradually drew all sects and classes—the Chartists last of all—into its ranks. It confined itself, with severe and unswerving self-control, to one object alone; and that object was a practical economical reform, bearing directly and powerfully on the most intimate interests of the people. It refused to be mixed

up with the Chartist demands. It stood aloof from all political parties. It commenced among the Radicals, recruited itself from among the Whigs, and ended by converting the chief of the Conservatives. It disdained and disclaimed the temporary strength which it might have gained by alliance with factions less single in their aims, less scrupulous in their means, less stainless in their character, than itself. And thus it went on, conquering and to conquer, by the very purity, directness, and simplicity of its course. It asked for no change in the representation, no remodelling of the constituencies, no extension of the suffrage, as essential pre-requisites to its success. But by the simple might of truth and justice, sobriety and union, it wrung Free Trade, by the votes of an immense majority, from a Protectionist House of Commons, elected for the express purpose of refusing the reform, and putting down the agitation. After this, who will say, who can think, that any other reform equally beneficial and as clearly just, sought by means as pure, by a course as direct, with a purpose as honest and as single, may not be obtained far easier and far sooner? Against what administrative improvement or social blessing will there ever be arrayed a phalanx as formidable from rank, wealth, numbers, old associations, and hereditary strength, as that which gave way before the quiet might of the Free Traders?

If, then, "complete suffrage" was not a necessary preliminary for the great victory of 1846, why should it be so for any future one? If not indispensable then, why is it indispensable now? If the repeal of the Corn Laws could be gained without it, *à fortiori*, can equitable taxation, rigid economy, colonial reform, cheap justice, liberated industry, and general education, be gained without it. "But (we shall be told) the continued existence of the evils we deplore and the abuses we admit, is a standing refutation of our argument,—

a refutation which stares us in the face, which meets us on the threshold. Why (it is asked) do partial and unjust laws remain on the statute-book, if, as you say, the popular voice has power sufficient, even with parliament as at present constituted, to procure their removal? Why, if the rights and interests of the working classes can secure a fair and favourable hearing from a House of Commons not elected by them, do institutions and customs still maintain their ground which are inimical to their interests and a clear violation of those rights?" Our reply is ready:—Where such cases exist, where the evil is recognised, the cure obvious, and its application within the reach of parliamentary enactment, for its delay the agitation for the Charter is to blame more than any other cause. This agitation has diverted the attention of the mass of the people from the accessible to the inaccessible,—from practical reforms which were sure to be granted, to organic changes which were sure to be refused,—from measures of which the benefit was certain, to schemes of which the effect was at best dubious and problematic. Is it true that parliament has declined to listen to or grant any great claim of justice or beneficence which the unenfranchised classes have clearly and steadily agreed in demanding? Can the Chartists point to any one such claim—*for an end, not a mere instrument*—which they have as a body firmly and systematically put forward? Have they ever joined their voice to that of the tried and laborious reformers who have toiled for years for the amendment of our law, for sanitary regulations, for the purification of our criminal jurisprudence, for the extension and improvement of education? Have they not, on the contrary, habitually stood aloof from the advocates of practical reforms, thwarted them, weakened them? Have they not perversely persisted in demanding what they knew could not be granted, and in *not*

demanding what they knew could not be refused? It is neither fair nor loyal to complain that parliament is deaf to the popular voice, because it declines to entertain topics on which the popular mind is not made up, and on which the popular voice has never loudly and distinctly spoken. Still less is it fair to divert public feeling into the channel of suffrage reform, and then to exclaim that parliament will not listen to the public demand for financial, judicial, or educational reform. Our conviction is rooted and deliberate, that the only reason why we have not already obtained all the fiscal, legal, and administrative changes *recognised* as just and beneficial, is, that they have never yet been demanded by the clear, unmistakeable, intelligent voice of the people; and the fault lies with those who, having the guidance and organisation of public sentiment out of doors among the classes in question, have chosen to direct it into another channel — the most ineffective in which popular desires can flow.

The plain truth is—as the honest and intelligent Chartists would be the first to discover as soon as they had obtained that command over the legislature which they desire—that the main evils of their lot lie far beyond the reach of any legislative chamber; that the causes of these and the cure of them are to be sought for, not in the region of politics, but in that of social and individual morals; and that parliamentary enactments, though mighty to aggravate, would be impotent to remedy. After they had abolished two or three oppressive and inequitable laws — relics of class legislation or of clumsy administrative arrangements (which, however, they never think of now, and which they would require to have pointed out to them by laborious philanthropists already in parliament), they would begin to perceive that the thing wanted was not (as they had



supposed) a more popular, but a more profound and sagacious legislature, — a wiser, not a more democratic parliament. They would discover that the real difficulty was, not to overcome selfish obstacles to the application of acknowledged remedies, but to ascertain what applications would really be remedial; — that the difference between parties regards what *ought to be done* for the mitigation or eradication of social sufferings, — not whether what ought to be done shall be done; — that the delay in rectifying what is wrong arises, not because the selfish and the powerful refuse to adopt a cure agreed upon as safe and effectual by the wise and good, but because the wise and good have not been able to discover and agree upon a cure. Their task, when the charter had given them the supremacy they imagine to be the one only thing needed, they would find, to their surprise and dismay, was exploratory, not enacting, — to study and investigate, not to abolish or to decree. They would not be slow to learn that the remedial power of parliament was incomparably more limited than they had believed, and the direction and mode in which that power should be exerted incomparably more difficult to decide. They would have obtained authority to enforce their own wishes and decisions; but they would, if honest and patriotic, find themselves much less clear and positive than at present, what those wishes were and what those decisions ought to be.

On the great majority of plans for social amelioration, the intelligent and thoughtful of the Chartists and “complete suffragists” differ among themselves nearly as much as members of the present parliament. Some would be the advocates of unlimited freedom of industry; others, as the Socialists, under the phrase “organisation of labour,” would fetter and direct it by a multitude of minute, vexatious, and oppressive regulations: some would be thorough-going free-traders; others would

insist on protection to native produce: some are earnest in favour of a "more liberal poor-law," which should make the paupers really comfortable; others, aware of its double operation, and dreading such liberality as at once cruel to the struggling rate-payer, and fatal to the independent energies of the labourer, scout the idea of any such mischievous augmentation of the burdens on the industrious: some want an agrarian law and the creation of a mass of "peasant proprietors;" others, warned by the example of France, look with doubt and mistrust on a scheme which bears so fair and attractive an outside. On one point they would probably all agree—one reform they have long been taught by their leaders to regard as the most important and unquestionable of all,—viz. a reduction in the amount, and an alteration in the incidence, of taxation. For years, the enormous weight and unequal pressure of taxation has been dinned into their ears as their prime grievance—the chief source of all their misery. To this, therefore, their attention would be most immediately and unanimously directed; from this they would expect the most certain and the most prompt relief. They would proceed at once to reduce the national expenditure; to substitute direct for indirect taxation; and to "equalise burdens," as it is called, *i. e.* compel the rich to pay that "fair share" which it is assumed and asserted they now evade.

Now our limits will not allow us to enter into any details to show how soon inquiry would cause our supposed legislators to pause, to hesitate, to start, as they gradually perceived how unfounded were many of their previous ideas, how noxious and suicidal would be many of their proposed improvements, even on this apparently clear and beaten path. Had we space, it would be easy to prove our rapidly a suspicion would dawn upon them—how surely in time this suspicion would grow

into a certainty—that the amount of expenditure on which a saving could be effected consistently with national good faith, was far smaller than they had imagined—was in fact only 22,000,000*l.* instead of 50,000,000*l.*;—that many items of this expenditure required, for the good of the people themselves, to be augmented instead of being curtailed—those, namely, for education, for sanitary reforms, for the treatment of criminals, for the administration of justice;—that a mischievous parsimony, not a dangerous profusion, is the real “rock a-head;”—that the effect of pushing direct taxation further than at present would be most indubitably to augment its pressure on the working classes;—that (what would astonish them more than all) there is good reason for believing, and would be no great difficulty in proving, that the rich—the enfranchised, electoral classes at least, who are supposed to shift their burdens on the unenfranchised—do actually pay not only their “fair share,” but, in all probability, considerably more;—and lastly, that while the taxation which the poor impose upon themselves is enormously heavy, the amount of that which they are compelled to contribute to the state is beyond example light.\*

We recur, then, to our first position—that a new measure of parliamentary reform is demanded, rather in the name of theoretical propriety than of practical advantage. This, however, is much, though less to the English than to most other nations. We are no admirers of the French turn of mind, which loves to arrange political institutions according to a scientific and harmonious plan, which frames constitutions of most rectangular perfection on paper, but fated to prompt shipwreck as soon as they are launched on the rough waters of the actual world. Still we are far from

\* See Porter on the Self-imposed Taxation of the Working Classes. Also Vol. I., art. Principles of Taxation.

saying that general principles are to be neglected, or lightly set at nought. We could go nearly as far as Mr. Carlyle in denouncing shams. An institution should be as much as possible what it professes to be. It should perform its promises. It should work out its original, or at least its actual purposes. It should be true to its own idea. It should correspond with its theory, as far as difficulties of practical action will permit. It should be brought into harmony with itself, as far as this can be done without incurring from change greater evils than those consequent upon inaction.

But *is* our present representation so untrue to its theory as the democratic party are wont to allege? Inconsistent with the democratic theory now put forth it unquestionably is: is it so inconsistent with the genuine theory of the British constitution? We think not. Parliament may be viewed in two lights, as the embodiment of one or other of two ideas. It may be conceived either to comprise the *collective wisdom* of the nation, or to represent the *collective opinions and feelings* of the nation. Whichever of these be the true theory—or whether the genuine conception be not a modification of the two—the democratic proposals are equally wide of carrying it out. If the object of the representative system be to collect into one body the *élite* of the nation, the best, the wisest, the most experienced men it contains,—then assuredly a widely extended suffrage would be a most strange and clumsy device for attaining such an end. Its successful working would demand a discernment, a self-knowledge, a self-denying virtue which no history warrants us in regarding as the characteristics of popular and imperfectly educated masses. The wisest men are often the most retiring, and would not seek popular suffrages; they are always the most diffident and moderate, and would not command them; they are often the most unbending, and would not con-

ciliate them ; they are habitually the most far-seeing, and would soar out of the region of their sympathy. The best men are the most quick to feel and the sternest to reprove the wrong desires, the selfish passions, the unhallowed means, so often paramount among popular masses,—and they would disgust and repel the very people whose suffrages the theory requires them to unite. The most experienced statesmen—those who have been longest at the helm—are often less likely than newer and more untried men to be selected by the popular voice. They will have inevitably disappointed many unreasonable expectations, offended many senseless prejudices, rebuked many unwarrantable claims. They must often have imposed salutary but galling restraints. They must have repressed with wholesome severity, dangerous, though perhaps excusable excesses. They must often have sown precious seed for future harvests, which seed, to visions less profound and prophetic than their own, will seem to have been wastefully thrown away. They must often have imposed present burdens of a most onerous pressure for the sake of a distant good not yet achieved, and only dimly seen. In the course of their strict duty as wise and conscientious men, they must infallibly have cooled the zeal of many friends, and heated the animosities of many enemies. Yet the theory requires that the most numerous and least cultivated classes in the community shall have discernment, faith, and forbearance to select them, in spite of all these repulsive antecedents, from among rivals undamaged by a trial. If the best and wisest men are to be chosen, the good and wise of the nation should be the choosers. If the parliament is to be the *élite*, you must have something like the *élite* for your electors.

If, on the other hand, as democratic orators allege, the intention of the representative system is, that parliament should consist of men specially acquainted with



the wants, conversant with the interests, sympathising in the feelings of the nation,—that it should be a faithful reflex of the sentiments, opinions, and wishes of the whole community,—then “complete suffrage” would appear to offer the surest means of failing of the end desired. For what is a *Nation*, in a highly advanced and complicated state of civilisation like ours? Not a mere aggregation of millions; not a homogeneous mass of units; but a congress of ranks and classes, bound together in an ancient and time-cemented union; having, it is true, one common, real, ultimate interest, but varying in their characters, occupations, and immediate aims; called to special duties, discharging separate functions, guided by peculiar tastes and desires, representing different phases of intellect and opinion, and considering questions of government and social policy from widely divergent points of view. Some are by nature attached to the old, the venerable, and the stationary; others are by temperament impatient of stagnation, and eager for novelty and change. Some conceive that the true evolution of our destiny lies in progress; others would dwell for ever in the ancestral homes of wisdom and content. Some represent that element of restless enterprise which has subdued continents and traversed seas; which has stimulated the wonderful achievements of art, and has robbed science of her secrets; and which has laid every other land under contribution to enhance the amenities of our own. Others, again, embody the tastes and characteristics proper to the placid and plodding occupations of keepers of sheep and tillers of the soil. Some have the ideas of government which are natural to the leisure and refinement of aristocracy; others embrace those of an impetuous, energetic, unreflective democracy. And the proposed project for obtaining a fair representation—a faithful reflex of all these varieties—of the conserva-



tive and the progressive, the religious and the reckless, the submissive and the turbulent, the noble and the plebeian—is to adopt such a system of election by numbers, as, *if really operative*, would virtually throw the whole representation into the hands of one class only—the class assuredly the most numerous, the most mobile, the most easily misled; but neither the most various, the most catholic, nor the most competent.

Such a scheme would clearly bring about at least as inequitable a distinction of political power, as is alleged by its critics to characterise the present system. Universal suffrage, “manhood suffrage,” or any near approach to either, would be the most obvious and flagrant piece of class-legislation on record. It would hand over the entire power of the State to one section of the community. It would enable the working classes to swamp and over-ride every other class, and, when they pleased, all other classes together.\* The old unreformed franchise gave preponderating influence to the aristocracy: the present system has transferred this to the middle ranks: the change demanded by the “complete suffragists” would give it in overwhelming measure to the

\* “In Leeds,” says Mr. Baines, “if the parliamentary franchise were extended as far as the municipal franchise, it would more than double the present number of voters; we believe it would bestow the suffrage on a number of the working classes equal to all the other classes of voters together. If *all householders* were admitted to the franchise, the voters among the working classes would outnumber those among all other classes put together in the proportion of *three to one*.”

Present parliamentary electors, after deducting duplicates	-	-	-	-	5,200
Present municipal electors	-	-	-	-	15,700
Estimated number of electors, if two years' residence were required	-	-	-	-	19,000
Ditto ditto if six months' residence ditto					30,000
Estimated number of occupants at a rental of 5 <i>l</i> . a-year	-	-	-	-	18,700

This is Mr. Baines' statement, in the “Leeds Mercury” of Dec. 6.

lower orders. Now systems which throw exclusive or overwhelming power into the hands of any class,—whether that class be numerous or small,—commit an equal injustice, though it may not incur an equal danger. But in truth we are not left to the tyranny of the many or the tyranny of the few as our sole alternatives. Our whole parliamentary theory is based upon a principle calculated, if faithfully adhered to, to preclude either. It professes to be a representation not of numbers, nor yet of property, but of CLASSES. If it were not so, it would be manifestly unfair, since it would then give to certain classes, not their *due share* in the national representation, but the *monopoly* of it. Considered from this point of view, the theory of our constitution is unassailable, though it may not be adequately or consistently carried out. Considered from this point of view, the appalling incongruities charged upon it by the Chartists constitute its peculiar merit. They cannot be denied: and from this position only can they be defended. If there were any foundation for the idea of the democratic party, that our object, or that of our forefathers, or the meaning of our parliamentary constitution, was to represent either individuals or pounds sterling,—its present form would deserve all the ridicule that Mr. Carlyle has heaped upon it, and would require all the sweeping alterations which Sir Joshua Walmsley and Mr. O'Connor propose to introduce into it. Those who look at it in such a light, may well point with bitter derision to its monstrous and startling anomalies\*;—to the 37,000 electors of the West Riding returning the same number of members as the 2000 electors of Rutland;—to 163,000 electors in one category returning the same number of members as 6600 electors in another;—to the vote of the member for Manchester, with a population of 250,000, neu-

\* National Reform Association Tracts.

tralised by the vote of the member for Calne, with a population of 5000 ; — to the four members for the city of London, representing 20,250 electors, counterbalanced in the legislature by the four members for Harwich and Ludlow, representing 700 electors, and 9000 inhabitants ; — to 21,000 electors *here* returning two members, and *there* 106. On their principles they may well be amazed and scandalised, that the rateable value of property represented by each member should in Rutland be 59,500*l.*, while in Middlesex it is 520,000*l.* ; — that the rateable property of Sussex, which is 1,169,000*l.* should return 18 members, while that of Yorkshire, which is 5,446,000*l.* returns only 37 ; — that the two votes for Liverpool, representing assessments of the annual value of 845,000*l.*, should be neutralised by the two votes for Honiton, representing an annual assessment of 9890*l.* ; — that the rateable property of Middlesex, amounting to 7,293,000*l.*, should return the same number of members (14) as seven small boroughs with a rateable property of only 85,000*l.* From the Chartist point of view, these incongruities must inevitably appear heinous and indefensible. From our point of view, the result of their proposed changes would seem at least equally so : and a system under which small towns as well as large, sparse districts as well as populous, poor places as well as rich, are represented, — appears indubitably wiser and fairer than either a representation according to numbers or a representation according to wealth.

The franchise we regard as a machine, — imperfect and unscientific if you will, — for the attainment of a twofold purpose ; — *first*, for the selection of 658 reasonably competent legislators ; *secondly*, for securing that the aggregate of these 658 chosen men shall, fairly and in due proportion, reflect and understand all those interests, feelings, opinions, and classes of character, which constitute the permanent elements of the nation. We

desire that the slow intellects of the country should be represented, as well as the quick intellects of the city ; the conservative sentiments of the sturdy drags on the movement, as well as the keen and impatient energy of the movement itself ; the refined and philosophic, as well as the contentious and extreme ; those who cherish pastoral delusions, as well as those who hug the scarce wider or more real hallucinations of bare utilitarianism ; those who love peace, as well as those who love progress ; those who are content with an unaugmenting competence, as well as those who "are in haste to be rich." We should regard as one of the most dangerous of experiments any such change as would throw the representation, exclusively and virtually, into the hands of the energetic, and the pushing, — the men to whom repose is torture, — the men to whom the past is all contemptible, the present all sombre, the future all golden. This danger the theory of our constitution keeps at bay, and its practice has hitherto avoided. The idea of the equal representation of every separate individual is modern, foreign, and unknown to English history : the idea of a representation according to property is almost equally novel and strange : both are French and American, rather than British. The English idea is the *representation of classes* : — the House of Lords, to represent the peerage ; the Knights of the Shire, to represent the landed gentry and the agricultural interests ; the Burgesses, to represent the commercial and industrial interests ; and the members for the University (but a poor allowance), to represent the interests of literature and learning. There does not seem to have been the slightest attempt, in the early history of our constitution, to proportion representation either to property or to numbers. Each county sent two knights, each borough two burgesses, without reference to population or to wealth. In so far as this

system gives no representatives to the labouring classes as such, or does not give them a fair and desirable share in the election of burgesses and knights, in so far it needs enlargement and adjustment to the altered circumstances of the times, and to the social and intellectual elevation of those classes. The accommodation, however, is to be sought, not in such a reversal of the whole system as would invest these classes with power over the whole representation of the country, but in a well-considered modification, or a harmonising addition appended to the existing plan. The desideratum is, some plan which shall give to working men a greater participation than formerly in the election of members, proportioned to their augmented intelligence and independence, — some plan which shall not overturn the existing system, nor proceed on the assumption of its incurable and radical injustice, but which shall harmonise with its main features, and which can be engrafted upon it, and dovetailed into it, so as to better attain its purposes, and carry out its meaning. The nature of the desideratum once agreed upon, we shall be able to proceed with some suggestions, not as to details, but as to the principles which should guide us in our endeavours to supply it. But, before doing so, we must give a passing consideration to the position taken by those of our fellow-reformers who consider our theory of the representative system to be unsound, and our statement of its practical deficiencies to be inadequate.

The two grounds taken by those reformers, both in parliament and the country, with whom we are at issue on the theory of representation, are these. The first class of *doctrinaires* affirm that "every man has an indefeasible right to choose his own rulers, and to share in the framing of those laws which he is called upon to obey." The second class, some of whom appear as "household," some as "complete," suffragists, maintain

that representation can only be just when it is co-extensive with taxation — that every man who pays taxes ought, *ipso facto*, and in that qualification only, to have a vote.

Now, there is no reasoning so vague and unsatisfactory as that which is based upon the alleged “abstract rights of man;” — and therefore we shall not join issue with the first set of schismatics from the true political Church, on that ground, but shall content ourselves with showing that they are themselves compelled to acknowledge the invalidity and untenableness of their own principle, by violating it as soon as they have laid it down; and that, if fairly worked out, it would lead to results which at once make it manifest that some fallacy lurks under its apparently axiomatic simplicity.

The principle laid down, it is obvious, goes the whole length of universal suffrage: every citizen, whatever be his age, sex, condition, or antecedents, is required to obey the law, and is punished for resistance to it: — every citizen, therefore, whatever be his age, condition, sex, or antecedents, is entitled to a vote in the election of the members of the legislature. The woman, as well as the man, is hanged for murder; the minor, as well as the adult, is imprisoned for fraud and transported for felony; the pauper, as well as the millionaire, the criminal, as well as the unspotted Briton, is compelled to comply with every requirement of the parliament: — all therefore have an equal claim to the elective franchise. Yet no man in his senses ever ventured to push the argument thus far. The most complete suffrage ever *practically* proposed, even by the Chartists, falls far short of *universality*; and makes exceptions as arbitrary and as fatal to the principle, as those familiar to our existing system. The nearest approach to universal suffrage ever seriously demanded, is, that every male of the age of twenty-one years, — not being an idiot, a



pauper, or a convicted criminal, — shall be entitled to a vote. Now, consider what vast exclusions are embodied in this proposal. In the *first* place, it excludes all women; thousands of whom hold independent property; hundreds of thousands of whom pay taxes; millions of whom are at least as competent, intellectually and morally, to exercise the franchise as a great proportion of those who now possess it; all of whom are as deeply interested in the enactment of wise and righteous laws as their masculine fellow-citizens. *Secondly*, it excludes at least a million between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one, who are at least as capable of a wise and honest exercise of the franchise as the freemen of Leicester, or the burgesses of Harwich.\* *Thirdly*, it excludes all those who have, in the eye of the law, manifested a character, and been guilty of a conduct, which give reason for believing that they would not exercise their franchise for their country's good. *Fourthly*, it excludes a large but varying number of paupers, whose misfortunes *may*, possibly, be their only fault. *Fifthly*, it excludes all whose weakness of intellect is so patent and notorious, as clearly to incapacitate them from exercising the right of suffrage beneficially or judiciously.

Now all these classes are called upon to obey the laws; all of them are interested in the process of legislation; since all suffer by partial or unwise enactments. Yet the advocates of universal suffrage conceive themselves—*truly*, to be guilty of no injustice—*absurdly*, to be guilty of no inconsistency or unfaithfulness to their

\* Benjamin Franklin, in an amusing endeavour to be consistent, grounded his demand for annual parliaments on the fact that every year numbers of citizens *came of age*, and that, therefore, they were unjustly excluded from the rights of citizenship, till a new parliament was elected. He never perceived that his argument, if valid, would render *monthly* or even *daily* elections necessary.

theory—in excluding them; and, if closely questioned as to the defensible grounds of such exclusion, would probably reply, that women and paupers are to be excluded because they are too dependent to vote *freely*,—idiots and minors because they are too incapable, ignorant, and immature, to vote *wisely*,—and convicted criminals because they are too ill-intentioned to vote *honestly*. Here, then, we find the advocates of universal suffrage driven by their own good sense to contend for the exclusion of large classes of their fellow-citizens, on the three several grounds of *moral, mental, and circumstantial unfitness*,—the only grounds of disqualification which are maintained by the advocates of restricted suffrages.

The principle, then, of an inherent, inalienable *right* to the suffrage on the ground of inherent and inescapable liability to law, is thus virtually surrendered by its supporters; inasmuch as they arrogate to themselves the *right* of excluding from the franchise those whom they regard as incapacitated, either by character or social position, from exercising it honestly, beneficially, or wisely. They and we arrive at the same practical conclusion, though starting from a different point. *We*—premising that our object is the election of a legislative chamber which shall be a fair representative, not of the folly, the violence, or the passions of the populace, but of the wisdom, industry, intelligence, and deliberate opinions of the people—in a word, of all the permanent and worthy constituent elements of the community—would confer the suffrage and distribute the members in the way best suited to secure this object. *They*—premising that every individual has an abstract right to the suffrage—yet think themselves entitled, and find themselves obliged, to exclude all those classes whose admission, they conceive, would endanger or impede the

election of a wise, competent, and faithful legislative chamber. By acting thus, they at once tacitly admit, and give in their adhesion to, our position, — viz., that the elective franchise is not an indefeasible natural right, but simply a political contrivance for the attainment of a special end.

But again: let the maintainers of universal suffrage as a natural and indefeasible right, consider the case of a colony established, not as colonies are established in these days, but as they were founded in ancient times. A hundred men of property and education, finding England too narrow (in one sense or another) to give them a chance of maintaining their social position or their opinions, without a weary struggle, agree to emigrate. They purchase a large uninhabited district from the native possessors, collect all the needful implements of agriculture, and take out with them all the appliances of their actual civilisation. They further select and carry out with them, at their own expense, a thousand men of the labouring class, perhaps their own tenants or artisans in the old country, and equally anxious with themselves to escape from its difficulties, but unable, by their own unassisted intelligence and means, to do so. The emigrants arrive in their new home, and form a happy and industrious community; the labourers toiling on the land which their employers had purchased; the capitalists providing them with tools, and directing and utilising their exertions. After the first necessary work is over, they meet to decide upon the form and principles of government for the new state. Would universal suffrage be either justice or wisdom here? Would the thousand poor have a right to bind and give law to the hundred rich? Would the many, in virtue of their numbers, be entitled to rule the land which the few had purchased, stocked, and brought them to? What honest Chartist will answer in the affirmative? Yet how can

he hesitate to answer in the affirmative without surrendering the principle for which he contends?

But we can put a still stronger and clearer case. Another colony sets out from the mother country, composed of different ingredients. Here, we will suppose they are all equal in condition and in wealth. A thousand of them are Irish, and a thousand Scotch. They arrive at their destination, and divide the land fairly between them, sharing as brothers should share. A hundred years pass over their heads. During this period the Irish have acted as Irishmen, when congregated in masses, will act. They have only half-tilled their soil, have followed the old obsolete plans of culture, and have quarrelled with all who offered to instruct them in a better way. They have been fond of sporting, have lived extravagantly, married early, and multiplied like rabbits. But they have grown poorer as they have grown more numerous; and have sold half their lands to their Scotch neighbours in return for food and aid in several seasons of scarcity which their own wilful ignorance or improvidence had brought about. At the end of the century they are 8000 in number, and are possessors of only a quarter of the land. In the mean time their fellow settlers, the Scotch, have worked hard, lived frugally, married late, studied the science of agriculture and the arts of life, developed all the native resources of the soil, brought up their families piously and wisely, and given them a solid and useful education. At the end of the century they find themselves 4000 in number, and possessors, by lawful purchase or inheritance, of three-fourths of the soil. What becomes of the right of the majority to govern? and what would be the consequence of universal suffrage here? Are the 8000 idle, incompetent, and reckless, to rule and make laws for the 4000 sober, diligent, and prudent? *Does not the very fact of their being so great and so impo-*

*verished a majority prove their unfitness and incapacity for governing?* And would it not be the grossest of all wrongs, and the most flagrant of all follies, in such a case to allow the votes of the 8000 to overpower those of the 4000?

In fact, the notion which so commonly prevails, of the *natural and inherent* title of the majority to govern and decide for the minority, is the result of a hasty and inconsiderate assumption. The supposed right — regarded as an original one, and prior to all convention — can by no process of reasoning be made good. Apart from contract and constitutional arrangements, and ancestral and time-consolidated habit, the majority can have no more claim to decide for and control the minority than the minority have to decide for and control the majority. There is no abstract principle on which such a claim can be based. The law of justice scouts it; the law of wisdom dreads it; the law of force, even, defies it almost oftener than it submits to it. A mere preponderance of numbers by no means implies preponderance either of capacity, of good intention, or even of strength. Wisdom generally lies with the minority, fairness often, power not unfrequently. There is, and can be, no law of nature, no axiom of eternal morals, in virtue of which three foolish men are entitled to bind and overpower two wise men, or three weak men two strong men. The truth we believe to be, that the claim so broadly made, and often so carelessly admitted — that the decisions of the majority shall be binding on the minority, and shall have the force of law over all — is the mere result of actual or tacit arrangement in the constitution of society; that the *simple* majority required at our hustings and in our parliament, the *positive* or *proportionate* majority required in certain cases in America and France, the *fixed* majority required in Scotch juries, and the unanimity

required in English ones—to give validity to the decisions of the respective bodies,—are all alike matters of arrangement, and not of natural right.

Mr. Burke, in his “Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs,” has stated the case so clearly and forcibly, that it would be foolish to use words of our own while his are at hand. He writes thus:—

“The power of acting by a majority must be grounded on two assumptions—first, that of an incorporation produced by unanimity; and, secondly, a unanimous agreement that the act of a mere majority (say of one) shall pass with them and with others as the act of the whole.

“We are so little affected by things which are habitual, that we consider this idea of the decision of a *majority*, as if it were a law of our original nature. But such a constructive whole, residing in a part only, is one of the most violent fictions of positive law that ever has been, or can be, made on the principles of artificial incorporation. Out of civil society, nature knows nothing of it; nor are men, even when arranged according to civil order, otherwise than by very long training, brought at all to submit to it. The mind is brought far more easily to acquiesce in the proceedings of one man, or of a few, who act under a general procuration for the state, than in the vote of a victorious majority in councils in which every man has his share in the deliberation. For there the beaten party are exasperated and soured by the previous contention, and mortified by the conclusive defeat. This mode of decision—where wills may be so nearly equal, where, according to circumstances, the smaller number may be the stronger force, and where apparent reason may be all on one side, and on the other little else than impetuous appetite—all this must be the result of a very particular and special convention, confirmed afterwards by long habits of obedience, by a sort of discipline in society, and by a strong hand invested with stationary and permanent power, to enforce this sort of constructive general will. What organ it is that shall declare the corporate mind, is so much a matter of positive arrangement, that several states, for the validity of several of their acts, have required a proportion of voices much greater than that of a mere majority. These



proportions are so entirely governed by convention, that in some cases the *minority* decides.\* The laws in many countries require more than a mere majority to *condemn*; less than an equal number to *acquit*. In our judicial trials we require unanimity either to condemn or absolve. In some corporations, one man speaks for the whole; in others, a few. Till the other day, in the constitution of Poland unanimity was required to give validity to any act of their great national Council or Diet. This approaches much more nearly to rude nature than the institutions of any other country. Such, indeed, every commonwealth must be, without a positive law to recognise in a certain number the will of the entire body.

“As in the abstract, it is perfectly clear that, out of a state of civil society, majority and minority are relations which can have no existence; and that, in civil society, its own specific conventions in each corporation determine what it is that constitutes the people, so as to make their act the signification of the general will;—to come to particulars, it is equally clear that neither in France (1790) nor in England has the original or any subsequent compact of the state, expressed or implied, constituted a *majority of men, told by the head*, to be the acting people of their several communities. And I see as little of policy or utility, as there is of right, in laying down the principle that such majority are to be considered as The People, and that their will is to be law.”

It is indeed abundantly certain that the will of the numerical majority was not originally, and has never been in England, the ruling and deciding authority. It cannot, therefore, now be made so except by the voluntary agreement of the whole, or by the dissolution and unanimous reconstruction of the social structure on this basis, or by the forcible coercion of the smaller number.

The conventionalism which lies at the root of all these

\* As in the case of the French Chambers (July, 1851), on the debate on the revision of the constitution, when 278 votes carried their will against 446. In many clubs two black balls are sufficient to exclude a candidate whom two hundred vote for.

social and political arrangements is strongly brought out by another fallacious and self-refuting conclusion, which has not obtained the attention it deserves, and which flows from the assumption that every man has an equal natural right — antecedent to and irrespective of convention — to participate in framing the laws by which he is to be governed, whether these laws relate to the imposition of taxes, or the enforcement of duties or restraints. Of course this right must include another (of which it is, in fact, only a varying expression) — that of refusing obedience to any law which he had no share in framing. If this position were a sound one (as it would be were there no tacit convention in the case), it would follow, first, that no constituency can be justly held bound to obey any law *against which their representative voted*; since with no decency or propriety of language can they be said to have had any share in the framing of a law *against* the framing of which, they, through their constitutional organ, struggled and protested. It would follow, secondly, that no elector *whose candidate was rejected* could be bound to obey any law passed by a parliament to which his candidate was not sent, even where the member for his borough or county voted in favour of such law; since it is obviously an impudent fiction to speak of such an elector as represented by the very man *against whom he voted*, and who, therefore, by that act, he declared, did not, and should not, represent him. It would follow, finally, that in no case could the defeated minority be bound to obey laws imposed on the community *against their will*, by the triumphant majority; since it is a mockery and an abuse of words to represent them as having contributed to sanction laws which they repudiate and condemn, and which they did all in their power to prevent from becoming law. If the Chartists are right in their first principle, viz. that by

an inalienable natural *right* every freeman's consent is necessary to a law which is to bind him, it is certain that he may righteously disobey any law to which, either personally, or through the delegate of his choice, he did not give, or actually refused his consent. If this conclusion is rejected, as obviously inadmissible\*, nothing remains but to acknowledge the unsoundness of the premises from which it is logically deduced.

Other parties, arguing from a basis somewhat less broad, defend "complete" suffrage on the plea that "representation should be coextensive with taxation;" that every man who pays any portion of the state taxes, has a *right* to a voice in the election of those who are to levy and vote away those taxes. Whatever be the force of this claim, we are sure it is an unsafe ground on which to base any amendment of the representation. A man who pays money to the state has an unquestionable right to the article which he has paid his money for — viz., protection and justice: the other assumed right is by no means so easy to be made good in argument, nor to be carried out in practice. For, if the fact of being taxed is the thing which entitles a man to a vote, two conclusions surely follow: first, that a man who is not taxed ought not to have a vote; and, secondly, that every man should have a number of votes in some degree proportioned to the taxes which he pays. If the principle relied upon by the claimants be sound, then any poor man who shall escape taxation by denying himself the enjoyment of any taxed luxuries (as under our present fiscal system he may easily do), loses thereby his title to the suffrage; and if the revenue should be raised, as many of our parliamentary reformers now propose, wholly by direct taxes levied

\* So clearly does this appear, that Mr. Spencer, in his able and logical work on Social Statics, admits, as one of the most unquestionable of privileges, the right of every man "to *ignore* the state."

upon realised property, then the great mass of the people—three-fourths or more of the community—would be justly and legitimately disfranchised, and would have no right to complain of their exclusion:—And, again, it would follow, that if the man who is taxed to the amount of five shillings annually, becomes thereby entitled to a vote, the man who is taxed to the amount of 100*l.*, must, by a parity of reason, be entitled to 400 votes. An electoral system, therefore, fairly based upon this popular watchword, would throw the representation almost entirely into the hands of the rich. If representation is to be coextensive, it must also be coequal with taxation. By the actual system, the vote of a man with 100,000*l.* a year, is of the same numerical value as the vote of a man having forty shillings a year. Under the full and legitimate working out of the principle laid down by the democratic party, the first vote would counterbalance 50,000 of the others. Are these arguers prepared for this practical deduction from their premises? And which system is most truly just and *popular*—theirs or the existing one?

Meanwhile, for the same reason, and arguing from the very grounds taken by them, the proposal of the friends of “complete suffrage” would involve the very acme of injustice; since it would virtually throw the representation into the hands of the *non-taxpaying* classes. It would call on one class of the community to make up the revenue, and another class to return the members. It would divide those who pay the taxes from those who spend them, more effectually even than the most privileged and partial system of former days. For, as a simple matter of fact, who now pay the taxes? the represented or the unrepresented classes—the electors or the non-electors? Clearly the former, as has been well shown, in an overwhelming and yearly increasing proportion. The ten-pound

householders, the county freeholders, the larger tenants, and the classes above these, are the main contributors both to the state and to the local revenues. Perfect accuracy in the allotment is of course unattainable, but from calculations most carefully made\*, it appears that, out of a total annual taxation of sixty-six millions, the middle and upper classes pay above forty-five millions, and the working classes not quite twenty-one millions. Now, it is perfectly obvious, that it would be in the highest degree both unsafe and unjust to give to a class, who pay only 31 per cent. of the taxes—and with whom, moreover (as we have before shown†), it is perfectly optional whether they will pay even this proportion, or any proportion at all—the entire or main control over the selection of those who are to regulate the expenditure of the totality of these taxes. An economical administration of the public money would clearly not be secured by any such arrangement; nor, probably, an equitable distribution of the public burdens. Indeed, we think it is a matter which well deserves the serious attention of our statesmen, whether the course in which we have for many years been proceeding, and in the following out of which a new extension of the suffrage would be a great and further stride,—the course of extending political power to the lower orders, at the same time that *pari passu* we exonerate them from taxation,—be not one of questionable policy and uncertain issue.

We are thus brought back to our original position:—that the true theory of the English constitution is not the representation of numbers, nor yet of property, but of classes;—and that the suffrage is not so much a natural claim as a civil function— not an indefeasible right, but a means to an end. The franchise is a scheme

\* Vol. I. art. "Principles of Taxation."

† See "Edinb. Rev." No. cxc.

for the attainment of an object — that object being a government which shall fully understand, duly represent, and sedulously attend to, the interests and views of the various classes which together make up the totality of the nation. This principle once made good, our course is comparatively clear and easy; for we have only now to inquire what arrangement and distribution of the suffrage will best attain the aim in view. This principle indicates as our first rule the extension and the limitation of the franchise, in the first instance, to all who are in all points *qualified* to exercise it for the benefit of the community; and afterwards the progressive and the gradual enlargement of it as the number of the qualified increase. Now this “qualification” in a voter implies theoretically three things, — competence to comprehend his own and his country’s interest; harmony of interests between himself and the community at large; and freedom to obey the dictates of his own conscience. Or to speak more tersely, it implies *capacity* to choose a good representative, *willingness* to choose him, and *independence*, or ability of circumstances, to choose him. If any of these three elements of sufficiency be wanting, the elector is, in the eye of theory, disqualified from the beneficial exercise of the franchise; and it would be a mistake to bestow it upon him. But here comes in our practical difficulty. We want some *criterion* of these qualifications. We cannot examine the case of each individual candidate for the franchise, and test, by actual investigation, his possession of the three requisites. We must fix upon some general standard which shall, *on the whole*, and in the great majority of instances, indicate, or give a rational presumption of, the presence of the said qualifications. This standard can rarely give us more than an approximation to the solution of our



problem: the criterion must at best be a rude one. Now this criterion varies in different countries: with most of our continental neighbours the payment of a certain amount of direct taxes is the favourite, if not the sole one. With us it is and has always been the possession of property—indicated in the county by the actual ownership or occupancy of a certain amount of land, and in boroughs by residence in a rate-paying house of a certain annual value. Now the *principle* of this criterion is assailed by many: it is alleged that the possession of property is about the coarsest, vulgarest, and most inconclusive test that could be selected; that thousands who possess no property and cannot afford to live in a ten-pound house, are mentally and morally admirably qualified to exercise the franchise; and that thousands who own great wealth and live in costly residences, are disqualified by ignorance, meanness, and servility. We may grant them both statements to a very considerable extent. Still we think, that no better criterion than a property one can be devised, and that on the whole it is a practically good one, though the details of it might be altered with advantage.

Its fellow-candidate for public acceptance at present is an educational test. It is proposed that every man who has attained a certain amount of information, or mastered a given amount of instruction, shall be entitled to be put on the register. Mr. Symons has put forth a suggestion—not without a certain plausible ingenuity—that any one not civilly disqualified by crime or pauperism, who presents himself in the Revising Barrister's Court, and can write from the dictation of the barrister, accurately and intelligibly, a sufficient number of sentences, shall be held to have given proof of his qualification, and shall be endowed with the franchise. Now, in the first place, we submit that the faculty of reading

and writing with accuracy and facility is but a very imperfect test of real capacity. Many a sagacious artisan, many a shrewd long-headed farmer, who spells ill, writes a scandalous scrawl, and reads only when aided by the index of a dirty finger, is endowed with all the intellectual capacity and moral requirements for a perfect elector. Nay, we know many well-educated gentlemen, whom, under such a system, the revising barrister would reject with infinite disgust, and pronounce disqualified, on the faith of their illegible autographs. And many who could pass their examination in the court with credit and *éclat*, would be wholly destitute both of the sagacity to select a good candidate, and the courage to vote for him in the face of sinister inducements or impediments. But even though education and intellectual capacity could, by some yet undiscovered machinery, be gauged and tested, we should still have arrived at only one of our three requisite elements of qualification; harmony of interest and wishes with the public good, and independence of undue influence, would remain wholly unascertained. Moreover, while we fully and unreservedly allow, that a mere property qualification admits many who had better be excluded, and excludes some whom it would be most desirable to enfranchise, yet we are by no means sure that it is not a more faithful and adequate test even of capacity than a mere intellectual one could be. We are disposed to believe that it is actually itself the *best educational test* that can be devised. If the property has been inherited, it affords a rational presumption that education has been conferred also, since a parent who can bequeath means to his son will rarely have left him without instruction. If the property reach a certain amount, it may be taken as a positive proof that the education customary in the rank of life thus indicated has been gone through. If, on the other

hand, the property has been acquired by industry, enterprise, and skill, what better criterion could you desire? The very object of the criterion we seek is, to confer the franchise upon those men who, in any way, have manifested the qualities needed for its judicious and patriotic exercise. And when the choice lies between the man of whom all we know is that he has acquired property, and the man of whom all we know is that he has received an education, which of the two should we, *primâ facie*, most surely presume to be fitted for electoral duties,—the instructed, cultivated, even clever man, *who has acquired no property*, and whose actual position therefore indicates that even his knowledge and talent have not been able to counteract the sinister and fatal operation of certain other qualities,—such as want of steadiness, want of judgment, want of character,—which have kept him down in the world, which have prevented him from doing well for himself, and will therefore most probably prevent him from choosing well for his country;—or the man whose station in life clearly points to his possession of mental and moral powers, of industry, of sense, of foresight, of perseverance; of those endowments, in short, which most precisely designate his fitness for the exercise of the franchise? The possession of property is, then, in every case a *presumption*, and in most cases a *proof*, of educational fitness; the want of property is a presumption, though not always a sound one, of the reverse.

All tests and criteria are rough and rude; the possession of property less so, however, we believe, than any other that could be practically worked. But our present system is defective and unjust in this—that *it selects two kinds or forms of property only as conferring the franchise*. Let us continue to maintain a property qualification; but let us not insist that the property, so

favourably and honourably distinguished, must be invested in one special mode. If a man has accumulated by diligence and frugality 50*l.* or 100*l.*, and spends it either in the purchase of a freehold, or in removing his residence from an 8*l.* to a 10*l.* house, his realised property confers upon him the distinction of a vote. But if he invests the same sum, earned by similar qualities, in the savings' bank, or in railway shares or debentures, or in the purchase of a deferred annuity—which would probably be much wiser modes of disposing of it—it carries with it no such privilege. This seems neither equitable nor wise. It might easily be rectified, and such rectification would be at once one of the safest, simplest, justest, and most desirable extension of the franchise that could be suggested. Let the production before the registration courts of a savings' bank book, showing a credit of 50*l.* of at least six months' standing, or of a *bonâ fide* certificate of shares to the same value in a valid railway, or of coupons to the same amount, be held to entitle a man to be inscribed upon the list of voters for that year. If next year he has withdrawn and spent his money or parted with his investments, he will have lost his franchise. As long as he holds property which gives him an interest in the stability and prosperity of his country's institutions, and intimates the exercise of sagacity and prudence, he will remain an elector. When these qualifications are no longer producible he will cease to be so. It would be simply necessary to surround this franchise with the needful securities against the fraudulent manufacture of votes.—A measure of this kind would at once include within the pale of the constitution, many of those among the working classes whom it is for the interest of the country to place upon the list of voters, and who well deserve to be there. It would be a great stimulus to diligence and saving with all to whom the suffrage is really an

object of ambition; and none else ought to have it. It would remove all valid, and nearly all plausible, objections to the exclusiveness of the present system, since it would bring the franchise *within the reach* of all, or nearly all, who are qualified to exercise it independently and judiciously; for we cannot think that the power of voting for members of parliament would be, whether we consider themselves only or the community, a desirable possession for those who are either too poor, too dependent, or too unenergetic and self-indulgent, to be able, in the course of a few years, to lay by 50%. as a provision for age, misfortune, or advancement. It is possible that this suggestion might with advantage be extended to other modes of investment, or to all: but those are details for the practical statesman, which we do not wish to enter upon here. The great principle which it is important to bear in mind is, that the franchise should not be *given* to the working classes, but *should be attainable by them*; that it should not be conferred as a boon, but should be made capable of being achieved by the same qualities which are needed to exercise it well.

The project of enlarging the constituency by a reduction of the amount of assessable value which confers the franchise in towns, is open to two serious objections. In the first place, it would in no degree remove the present theoretical defect of that branch of qualification, viz., its inequality in different towns. At present, a ten pound house in Ludlow or in Warwick, is inhabited by the same class of men who in London or in Manchester would inhabit one of fifteen or twenty pound rent. Hence, the franchise, though nominally the same, is in reality far lower in the latter cases than in the former. This inequality is inherent in the nature of the qualification; if we were to endeavour to rectify it by ascertaining the *equivalent of a ten pound house* in each dif-

ferent borough, and fixing the franchise accordingly, we should find ourselves involved in endless difficulties and embarrassments. In the second place, if you reduce the franchise from ten pounds to eight, you admit but few additional voters, and still exclude nearly the whole of the operative classes. If you reduce it to six pounds, you admit nearly the whole of the working classes in the metropolis and the great manufacturing towns (most of whom live in houses paying a yearly rent of six to seven pounds); but you continue to exclude those same classes in most other districts. In other words, you admit not the *higher* class of operatives throughout the kingdom (which is your object), but *all* the operatives in certain districts (which is not your object). The operatives whom you admit will belong, probably it is true, to the most intelligent and thriving, but also to the most excitable section of that portion of the community. The reduction of the qualification from ten pounds to eight will, indeed, have this counterbalancing advantage; it would enable most of the artisans in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Sheffield, who were really anxious for the franchise, to obtain it, by creating a demand (which would speedily be supplied) for a class of dwellings somewhat superior to those they now inhabit. But on the whole it would neither meet the objects of the Conservative reformers, nor satisfy the demands of the Radicals. It would simply extend a test of electoral fitness which is admitted to be theoretically objectionable and practically unequal.

The operation of Mr. Locke King's proposal, to extend the county franchise from a fifty pound to a ten pound tenancy, would be very questionable. In some cases, in the larger villages and the smaller towns, it might perhaps introduce a valuable class of voters; but in small hamlets, and in purely rural districts, a more dependent class than the ten or twenty pound tenants are nowhere



to be found. The objection to the "fifty pound tenant-at-will clause," was that it conferred the franchise upon a number of men who were almost certain to vote under the direction of their landlords. A ten pound tenant-at-will clause would enormously augment this number, and incalculably increase this certainty. Such a result can be desired by no party but the Tory gentry. A far preferable mode of enlarging the constituency might be found in the plan of uniting a number of small towns in the election of a member ; a precedent for which may be found in two or three cases in Scotland.

We purposely avoid entering into any lengthened discussion of these and other definite proposals ; our object being to steer clear of details, while bringing out as strongly as possible the *principles* which should guide us, and the aims we should keep in view, in our extension of the franchise. The end to be sought for once distinctly seen, the means by which it is to be sought become comparatively easy of discovery. We pass over, therefore, all consideration of the ballot, of the abolition of property qualification for members, of the adoption of the municipal or household suffrage, and several other propositions which have at various times been candidates for popular favour. But before we conclude, two important points remain, to which we must direct attention, and which we will treat as briefly as we can.

One of the favourite points of the democratic panacea—the point on which, next to universal suffrage, its advocates have laid the greatest stress—is the division of the kingdom into *equal electoral districts* (districts that is of equal population), which should return one or two members each. This scheme has a simplicity and mathematical exactness and completeness about it, which renders it, at first sight, very attractive. But since we have shown that neither property nor mere numbers can form a desirable or equitable basis for representation,

nor ever did form its original basis in this country, the whole argument on which this favourite recommendation is founded, falls to the ground. If votes ought to be proportioned to property—if property is the thing to be represented—then parliamentary as well as parochial elections should be carried on under “Sturges Bourne’s Act,” according to rateable assessment. If every man is entitled to a vote—if population is the thing to be represented—then the most perfect theoretical system would be that which should give to every man a vote for the whole 658 members\*, and whatever practicable system approached nearest to this in action would be the most defensible. Granting their premises, the reasoning of the advocates of equal electoral districts would be unassailable. But we hold their premises to be unsound; and we believe that they themselves would shrink from some of the practical consequences of their recommendation. In the first place, the number of members allotted to the three divisions of the United Kingdom would be greatly changed. As thus:—

Divisions.	Present Allotment of Members.	Allotment according to Census of 1841.	Allotment according to Census of 1851.
England and Wales -	500	392	431
Scotland - - -	53	59	69
Ireland - - -	105	207	158
United Kingdom -	658	658	658

A plan of representation which would thus require readjustment every ten years; nay, which, to be carried out with scrupulous fairness, would require readjustment every parliament, or possibly every session, would, to say the least, prove enormously inconvenient. But, passing over this, what man is there on this side of the

\* The French approach nearly to this theoretical perfection in their system. Thus Paris returns 34 members, and its 250,000 electors vote for all 34.

Channel, whether Radical or Conservative, acquainted with the records of the Irish parliament before the Union, or with the proceedings and character of Irish members of the imperial legislature since that event, who would not look with dismay upon such an increase of their proportionate numbers as either the census of 1841 or that of 1851 would have given them, on the basis of equal electoral districts? At present, in our House of Commons, the solid and reflective English element outnumbers its capricious and volatile Irish companion in the proportion of *five* to one, and even with that preponderance, has difficulty in reducing it to order. What would be the result, was it only *three* to one, as by the census of 1851, or *two* to one, as by that of 1841.

But, in truth, the proposed plan would present anomalies to the full as startling and extreme as any that exist under the present system. Thus *the Metropolis alone would return nearly as many members as the whole of Scotland*. By the last census (that of 1851) Scotland had a population of 2,870,784, and at the equal rate of one member to 41,500 inhabitants, would be entitled to 69 members:—the metropolis, by the same census, had a population of 2,361,000; and therefore, at the same rate, would return 57 members. That is, one city—already enormously and disproportionately powerful as the centre where all the rank, wealth, grandeur, and genius of the empire are too much concentrated, and especially influential over the legislature as being the seat of its deliberations,—would have all these unconstitutional and accidental advantages enhanced by commanding as many votes as a whole incorporated kingdom. Indeed, throughout the country, the operation of the plan of the electoral districts would be to swamp and overpower the quiet, slow, rural element of the English nation, by the pushing, energetic, mobile element which

characterises towns and cities. This would be the needless aggravation of an intrinsic and natural unfairness, so to speak. As it is, and inevitably, forty thousand persons in a city—with their faculties brightened, their energies aroused, their ambition stimulated, and all the vehement and restless qualities of their nature excited into preternatural activity, by a life of constant collision and publicity,—are an immense overmatch for forty thousand others scattered in the country, who are slower thinkers, enjoy more placid and sluggish tempers, and lead a life of comparative dulness and isolation. The greater influence on national feelings and proceedings which will be exercised by the former body, is an indefeasible privilege which cannot be taken from them, but which assuredly needs not to be enhanced by legislative arrangements. Yet the proposed plan—though as an equivalent to a certain degree, it would absorb small boroughs into the surrounding country constituencies—would enormously increase this disproportionate weight;—would allot *seven* (or now *eight*) members each to Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow, *six* to Dublin, *five* to Birmingham and Leeds, *four* to Sheffield and Bristol; while, as we have seen, the Metropolis would have no less than *fifty-seven*.

We pass over, purposely, all discussion as to the effect which such a division of the kingdom into new electoral districts, would have upon the relative strength of the Liberal and Tory parties in the House of Commons. Considerations of that kind would be beside the mark here. The justice or wisdom of a measure of organic reform cannot be affected by the results it would produce on the preponderance of this or that set of special doctrinal views, and ought not to be argued on any such grounds. But the operation, which the proposed change would have in aggravating what appears to us the chief defect in the existing repre-

sentative system, deserves more detailed consideration. That defect is the *exclusive representation of majorities*. At present, it is only by a happy accident that the minority is ever represented at all. Under the actual system, each elector votes for *all* the members returned by his constituency;—for both, where there are two; for all four, where, as in the Metropolis, there are four. The mischievous operation of this will be perceptible and more and more serious, exactly in proportion to the number of members, and the largeness of the district. For example, in Andover there are 252 electors and two members: *one hundred and twenty-seven* electors may monopolise the whole representation, leaving the almost equal and very possibly much wiser number of *one hundred and twenty-five*, wholly unrepresented. In Liverpool, again, out of 17,316 electors, 8659 may utterly paralyse, ignore, blot out of constitutional existence, the remaining 8657. In London, there are four members: and we find that practically, at the last general election, 6722, the lowest number who voted for the Liberal candidates, had four representatives, while 6719, the highest number voting for the Tory candidates, had no representatives at all. In Paris, the case is still more flagrant. There are 34 members and 250,000 electors—each elector voting for the whole number. The contest is generally a very close one; and the result might easily be that the 34 candidates who obtained 125,001 votes should be elected, and the candidates who obtained 124,999 votes should be rejected:—in which case an obvious, practical, and mighty wrong would be committed on one half of the constituency.

Now in England, under our present system, we do not, it is true, obviate this injustice, but we, to a great extent, neutralise it by the *variety* of our constituencies. The minority which loses, by a narrow chance, the

representation in the large towns, belongs often to the same party which, by an equally narrow chance, gains it in the smaller boroughs. The defeated moiety in the city becomes the triumphant moiety in the county. Thus an inequitable result in one quarter is practically corrected by a countervailing *inequity* in another. If, however, the reforming and conservative parties, for example, bore the same numerical proportion to each other in every separate constituency, as they do in the country at large, it is obvious that the whole representation would be monopolised by one party, to the complete exclusion of the other. "To take a recent warning — suppose parliament had been dissolved on the Papal Aggression question; is there a single English constituency that would have returned Sir James Graham? Yet to say nothing of the fact that Sir James Graham's opinions on this subject were shared by a highly respectable minority in every constituency, no rational politician could see Sir James Graham excluded from Parliament without deep regret. Our constitution, in fact, gives no security for the representation in the House of Commons of opinions opposed to the mania of the moment, unless that mania happen to divide the town and country constituencies into opposite arrays. In case it array them both on one side, the majority not only has its will, but the question at issue cannot be argued within the court of ultimate decision, because the electoral system does not recognise the existence of minorities." There is nothing except the variety of our constituent bodies to prevent the *entire* legislature from being composed of the nominees of one half of the nation (*plus one*): the other half (*minus one*) might be, for all political purposes, utterly annihilated and forgotten. Such a result would embody so manifest an injustice, that few would defend it in principle, or endure it in practice.



Various suggestions have been thrown out for mitigating or removing this anomaly. Some have proposed that no elector should vote for more than one member. This, where there are two members, would remedy the evil in question, but would involve an unfairness of an opposite kind; since, in that case, the majority and minority might each return one member, and would, therefore, be *equally* represented, unless the majority should exceed two-thirds of the whole. Others suggest that each constituency should have three members, each elector still being restricted to one vote. But this would involve the disfranchisement or amalgamation of many boroughs, or the augmentation of the number of the House of Commons to a most inconvenient extent. A third proposition has recently been made, of a highly ingenious kind, — viz. that besides the local members, there should be a certain number of national members, and that any electors who pleased should be permitted to withdraw themselves from the local register, and inscribe themselves among the voters for these national representatives.\* The objection to this scheme is its novelty: a discussion of its merits would lead us into too wide a digression for our limits.

Now, from the possible extreme result of the exclusive representation of a small numerical majority of the nation, we are protected only by those very anomalies and incongruities which the advocates of equal electoral districts so mercilessly and inconsiderately assail. If the whole country were one vast "electoral district," the perfection of the theory, and the mischief of the practice, would have reached their climax: the larger and *more homogeneous* the districts, the more nearly are both approached: — the more various the constituencies, on the other hand, the more effectually

\* See a most able paper in the "Spectator" of October 18. 1851.

are both avoided. Now, the proposed plan of equal electoral districts, would render the constituencies frightfully homogeneous, and similar one to another. There would be a certain number of purely city constituencies; there would be three or four counties, as Westmoreland, Argyle, and Sutherland, which would afford purely rural constituencies; but all the rest would be mixed and uniform, composed of a blended aggregate from small towns and the adjoining country districts. If the plan, developed by Mr. Mackay in the Pamphlet which we have placed at the head of this article, were adopted, to all towns with a population of 41,000, and upwards, a member would be given for every 41,000 inhabitants. In this category, including the Metropolis and its different districts, there are (or were in 1841) 40 cities, towns, and boroughs, which now, among them, return 78 members, representing an aggregate population of 5,178,000; — which population, on the proposed basis, would entitle them to 124 members. There are 12 parliamentary boroughs, and several others, at present unrepresented with a population of between 30,000 and 40,000. These boroughs, many of them containing four-fifths of the population required to constitute a parliamentary district, might be classed with those just alluded to, inasmuch as the town-people would be sure to control the elections. But, to be within the mark, let us take 124 as the number of purely town representations, what would be the result? The House of Commons would then be divided into two classes; — one class, the 124 representing constituencies exclusively of one character, and all the rest, 534 in number, representing mixed constituencies of town and country people, of one uniform tone and colour, so that the majority in one would probably be the majority in all. If again, however, the prevalent plan of giving two members to each constituency were

adopted, the electoral districts would include a population of 83,000, and would, of course, be only half as numerous. In that case, the number of pure constituencies would be greatly diminished, and the mixed ones would be increased; and, becoming necessarily more and more homogeneous as they became larger in extent, the evil of the exclusive representation of the majority would become more and more enhanced.

Finally: any very wide and general extension of the franchise would have a noxious operation not commonly perceived, unless it were accompanied with a provision never hitherto suggested or desired. In order to reap from it the public benefits which its really patriotic advocates anticipate from it—in order to render it even innocuous or safe, it would require to be coupled with a provision to *make voting compulsory*, or, at least, so to facilitate it by arrangements and enforce it by consequences, as to render the exercise of the franchise virtually as universal as its possession. The reason will be apparent on a little consideration. It is obvious that all which the most complete representation—even if such actually and successfully followed from “complete” suffrage—could do, would be to confer upon the mass of the people the power to act as they liked;—to act wisely, if wisdom were their salient characteristic; to act selfishly and unwisely, if folly, ignorance, or ill-intention predominated in their ranks. But it remains to be seen whether universal or quasi-universal suffrage—“complete suffrage,” as Mr. Sturge calls it—*would* really throw the representation into the hands of the people,—whether it *would* give us the real, deliberate judgments and feelings of the masses. If it would do this—if its operation would be to render parliament the *bonâ fide* embodiment of the genuine opinions of the whole body of the working classes—if it would procure us their individual, uncanvassed, unbiassed answers to

the questions, "Which of two men, whose life and character you know, will you choose as your legislator?" "Which of two sets of political doctrines will you patronise?" "Which side, on such and such a question, will you adopt?"—we should dread and deprecate its advent still, but much less, assuredly, than we now do. But we think it as certain as the effect of any untried or partially tried cause can be, that it would not do this;—that universal suffrage, or any near approach to it, would, practically and in all ordinary times, throw the representation into the hands of one section—and that neither the most numerous nor the most desirable section—of the working classes;—that it would rarely give us the natural feelings or unsuggested opinions of the masses themselves, but only the reflected ones of those self-constituted and self-regarding leaders who (as is too often the case in strikes) seek to *exploiter* them for the furtherance of their own political crotchets or personal aims;—and that whenever it *did* give a genuine representation of the mind and heart of the people, it would only be on those occasions of blinding and perilous excitement when they would be the most likely to think superficially, to feel passionately, and to be led easily and fearfully astray. We are not speaking, it must be remembered, of the operation of universal suffrage in the abstract, or as it might be in an ideal England—one not, we trust, quite chimerical, but one, as certainly, not yet realised—in which the labouring poor should be as sober, as instructed, and as well-to-do, as our middle ranks now are; we are speaking of its inevitable tendency in our country as it actually is—among our people, such as history and circumstances have made them.

The ignorance and indifference of the great mass of the poor is the rock on which in our actual condition universal suffrage would be inevitably wrecked. It is

certain that, to the vast majority of agricultural peasants the possession of a vote would at present be a dead letter, an unvalued privilege, a nuisance rather than otherwise. They understand nothing of politics, they feel not the slightest interest about them; their care and anxiety are naturally enough confined to the material wants of their own family; and they have not education enough to discover, scarcely to understand if it were explained to them, the bearing of this or that political measure, of the triumph of this or that candidate, on their social state. Not knowing how to vote, not understanding why they should vote, not caring for whom they voted, apart from occasional personal predilections, they would in ordinary practice never vote at all, unless bribed, cajoled, or driven to the polling-booth. Hence among this class the suffrage would cease to be exercised by all save a turbulent, agitating, and intriguing few, who would be far from being either fair or favourable specimens of their fellows. In towns, indeed, where the working population is both more intelligent, and more accustomed to feel an interest in political discussions, a much larger proportion of the electors would record their votes; but even here, generally speaking, the largest class—the class whose opinions and wishes we most desire to ascertain—would be the last and slowest to express them. There are two sections of workmen: there is the steady, peaceful, industrious artisan, who desires nothing more than to support his family in comfort and independence, by honest and unremitting industry, and to pass his leisure hours in the enjoyment of their society; and there is the *soi-disant* enlightened artisan, fonder of talking than of working, a reader of newspapers rather than of books, a frequenter of the public-house, the club-room, and the union; who prefers the company of fellow-politicians to that of his wife and children, and whose languid performance of his

personal duties is a poor guarantee for the conscientious discharge of his patriotic ones. For the first of these men, a day lost at elections or in a canvass is a real and unpleasant sacrifice; it is a supper the less or the scantier for his children, it is an unfinished job, a lost engagement, an interrupted labour. The excitement and general idleness prevalent for many days during election times interfere with his regular duties, and diminish his already inadequate earnings. His vote is to him a nuisance and a loss. For the second, the noise and tumult of hustings and committee-rooms form a natural and favourite atmosphere; he is in his element in popular commotions, and for him the oftener they come the better. The result is, that the one whose vote we wish to have, whose opinion we should be glad to know, is silent; the other, whose vote is of no value, either intrinsically, or as indicative of the genuine feelings of the labouring class, never misses an occasion of recording it. And thus universal suffrage, when unaccompanied by the provision we have suggested to neutralise its evils, ends in eliciting, not the universal sentiment, but the notions, prejudices, and passions of the least numerous, least competent, and least important section of the masses.

There are two circumstances in which this objection would not apply, but where it would give place to another and a still more decisive one. Two conditions may be supposed under which the suffrages of nearly all the working class might possibly be obtained; but under one of these conditions those suffrages would not be genuine and spontaneous, and under the other they would not be safe or beneficial. When questions were in agitation, or interests at stake, which interested men of property, but which were of faint, remote, or hidden concern to *prolétaires*, every conceivable influence would be brought to bear by the former upon the latter, in order to drive or lead them to the poll. Persuasion,



bribery, intimidation, the legitimate and illegitimate influence of local position, or family connection, would be employed, without scruple and without mercy, to induce the uninterested labourers to record, not *their* wishes, but the wishes of their superiors in rank. Or when demagogues and agitators by profession had any cry which they desired to raise, any sinister or personal purpose which they wished to serve, as in the case of the Repeal of the Union, they would contrive, by secret agents, by monster meetings, by inflammatory harangues, by the circulation of exciting tracts, to arouse the mass of the people to an extent sufficient to secure a triumph at the hustings or the polling-booth. But in neither of these cases should we obtain the genuine expression of the popular voice. In neither would the honest advocates of universal suffrage have attained their aim. In both cases there would have ensued, from the trial of their plan, a result which they did not wish for, and had not foreseen. In both cases the people would have been *exploité* for the selfish purposes of others. In both cases, all which universal suffrage had effected, would have been the multiplication of the political tools in the hands of the same political artists as at present.

Occasionally, however, crises of vast excitement and mighty significance arise, when popular interests are too manifestly and too painfully involved to permit popular feeling to slumber, when the generally languid and concealed connection between political affairs and the social welfare of the masses comes suddenly out into startling and vivid light; or, when some abnormal exacerbation of their material privations arouses them to seek in political operations at once an explanation and a cure. On such occasions Universal Suffrage will become something more than a name, or an instrument for other men to work with. Under the supposed excitement nearly every man will give his vote without being

either bribed, or coaxed, or goaded to the hustings. But these are precisely the occasions when Universal Suffrage is least likely to return a healthy or serviceable answer to the appeal made to it. The popular mind is then in a state of too vehement emotion to promise either careful consideration or a just perception of its true interests, or even to afford a fair representation of its ordinary workings. In five cases out of six these moments of general awakening from the usual monotonous apathy of daily labour will occur, either in periods of scarcity or of commercial convulsion; in periods, that is, when the greatest coolness and patience are needed to weather the crisis, without aggravating or prolonging it. If any thing can add to the danger and augment the sufferings of such times, it is for popular commotion to be superinduced upon popular privation. If any thing is calculated to increase the peril and the wretchedness to incurable intensity, it is for the masses to be endowed with the power of political action at seasons of such peculiar difficulty, and under the influence of such maddening excitement. A system of rule under which the sovereign power is dormant and inert when ordinarily comfortable, and called into action and made omnipotent only when frantic with misery; under which it abnegates its functions in hours of calm, to resume them in its moments of passion; under which it drops the reins when the driving is easy and the road is smooth, to snatch them at those difficult and perilous passages when the cool and dexterous hand of long experience is especially required—surely carries its own condemnation on its face.

In order to mitigate the dangers inherent in a widely popular franchise; in order to make it what its sincerest advocates desire it should be—an actual reality, not a mere deceptive name; in order to enable universal suffrage to express the universal will;—it would require

to be united with some provision for making the *exercise* of it universal also — compulsory, or virtually so. Practically, we believe, there would be no great difficulty in doing this. The non-exercise of the franchise at one election might incur forfeiture of it at the next; or a voting paper, like the census-paper, might be left at each man's house to be filled up, and be called for by the proper officer, who should take the declaration of the signer as to the genuineness of his signature and vote. The rule once decided on, the arrangements for carrying it into effect would be merely matters of detail for official ingenuity. On principle there could be no objection to such enforced performance of a patriotic function. The object which the state has in view, is to obtain the expression of opinion — the vote — of every enfranchised citizen. The natural and self-suggested mode of securing this object, is surely not to leave every citizen at the mercy of his own laziness, indifference, or forgetfulness, so that he may register his vote or not as he pleases, but *to ask him for it*,—exactly as it asks him for other things which it wants from him—his tax-paying liabilities, for example, or the numbers, ages, and occupations of his household. Not only can there be no objection, but there is every inducement, on the score of principle, to the adoption of such a course. If the franchise is conferred upon a citizen with a view to the benefit of the state, and as a means of obtaining the object of the constitution — viz., good government, and fair representation of the wants and feelings of the people,—it is at least as necessary to ensure its exercise, as to bestow it: to do the one, and omit the other, is to leave the work half done. If it be given—as it is sometimes claimed—on the plea of *right*,—then it is fit that the citizen should be reminded that every right involves a corresponding duty; that to claim his share in the privileges of citizenship, and yet neglect to perform

his share in its functions and obligations, is neither permissible nor just. In truth, the paramount object of the suffrage is to secure good legislators and rulers: he who will not do his part towards securing this national blessing, clearly neither deserves the franchise, nor can estimate its meaning and its value. The state does not leave it optional with a citizen whether he will serve on a jury, or fill up a census-paper or a tax-paper, or accept a parochial or municipal office. Why should it leave it at his option whether or not he will help to elect the nation's lawgivers and chiefs? If, indeed, those whom he chooses were to legislate *for him alone*, there might be some show of justice in allowing him a discretion as to whether he should trouble himself about the matter. But when he has had the function assigned to him—whether imposed upon him as a social obligation, or conferred upon him in consequence of his own claim—of choosing those who are to govern all his fellow-citizens,—then to neglect that choice, or to be careless over it,—to choose bad men, or to abstain from choosing any,—or to abstain from preventing bad men from being chosen, is an obvious dereliction of duty, to which the state should never make itself a party.\*

How far the English public is as yet from having risen to the "height of this great argument," will appear from a comparison of the number of electors *who voted* at the last contest with the numbers *on the register*. From the same comparison we may also learn how partially the franchise is valued in ordinary times, even by those more educated classes who now possess it;—and we can scarcely be wrong in applying the argument, *à fortiori*, to those less enlightened and less political classes

\* A proposal to make voting compulsory was recently negatived in the *late* French Chamber; but in this case it was proposed to make the neglect *punishable*. By the actual law, unless a certain proportion of the electors vote, the election is void.

to whom it is proposed to extend it. The following table is made out from the best and most recent materials extant. We have been obliged to confine it to *single* elections—those where only one member was habitually or on that occasion returnable,—as there is no published account of the number who *actually polled*; and where there are two or more candidates, therefore, the uncertain number of plumpers and split votes render it impossible to ascertain this otherwise than by an examination of each separate poll-book. The figures are taken from “Dodd’s Parliamentary Companion for 1851,” and “Ridgway’s Parliamentary Manual” for the same year.

Places.	Registered Electors.	Number who Polled.	Places.	Registered Electors.	Number who Polled.
Aberdeen - -	4,158	1,340	Lincoln - -	1,372	1,102
Abingdon - -	314	304	Liskeard - -	324	287
Athlone - -	330	196	London - -	20,250	8,831
Aylesbury (1848)	1,405	959	Lyme Regis (D.)	317	293
Aylesbury (1850)	1,405	646	Lymington - -	287	224
Banbury - -	551	390	Mallow - -	213	130
Bewdley - -	375	327	Mayo - -	1,014	234
Bolton - -	1,497	1,187	Montrose - -	1,345	1,108
Boston - -	1,003	743	Newcastle (S.)	1,028	913
Cardigan - -	650	590	New Ross - -	187	124
Carlou - -	449	265	Orkney - -	627	392
Cheltenham - -	2,278	1,821	Peebleshire - -	563	403
Cheshire (N.) - -	7,495	5,493	Poole - -	498	354
Chester - -	2,529	1,631	Shaftsbury - -	514	389
Cirencester - -	467	392	Sligo - -	603	279
Colchester - -	1,250	1,009	S. Shields - -	903	538
Cork - -	3,244	1,377	St. Alban’s - -	504	423
Drogheda - -	579	307	St. Ives - -	585	403
Dumbartonshire - -	1,215	830	Stockport - -	1,224	1,126
Dundalk - -	400	245	Sunderland - -	1,728	1,281
Dungarvan - -	407	286	Surrey - -	3,610	2,132
Falkirk - -	1,710	1,013	Truro - -	553	468
Fifeshire - -	2,659	1,602	Wakefield - -	731	652
Greenock - -	1,186	771	Wallingford - -	419	320
Haddingtonshire - -	662	407	Walsall - -	911	695
Hampshire (N.) - -	3,580	2,067	Warrington - -	697	625
Horsham - -	346	297	Westbury - -	334	319
Huddersfield - -	1,019	1,029	Wicklow - -	1,077	723
Hythe - -	758	400	Wight (Isle of) - -	1,665	849
Kidderminster - -	470	417	Yorkshire (W. R.)	36,750	26,538
Kinsale - -	281	191	York - -	4,289	2,422
Lancaster - -	1,372	1,256	Youghall - -	408	276

We feel averse to tables in which a considerable conjectural element must necessarily enter. Otherwise, if we could have ventured to give the estimate we had framed from the recorded *votes* of the number of *electors* who actually polled in the larger boroughs and counties, we should have brought out still more strongly the two conclusions deducible from this table; viz. *first*, the inadequate number of the registered electors who take the trouble to vote—sometimes not half, often not above two-thirds; and *secondly*, the much *larger* proportion of electors who record their votes in small boroughs, and those under local influence, than in the larger constituencies; showing that, where *left to themselves*, they are languid in the matter, and vote in full numbers only when driven to the poll. We believe we are near the mark in stating that, taking together London, Birmingham, Bristol, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hull, Lambeth, Leeds, Marylebone, Newcastle, and Nottingham, out of 131,169 electors, only 72,187, or 55 *per cent.*, recorded their votes; while in Bridgenorth, Cirencester, Devonport, Dover, Horsham, Lymington, Westbury, Aylesbury, Hastings, Pontefract, and Taunton, out of 10,638 electors, 9850 voted, or 92 *per cent.*



## REPRESENTATIVE REFORM.\*

It seems scarcely incumbent on any Ministers in these days to cut out for themselves gratuitous employment. We should have fancied that the urgent and inevitable duties of the hour would have left little either of strength or inclination for *hors-d'œuvres*. The natural impression of a spectator who contemplates our complicated and imperfect political organisation — the instruments that have become rusty — the arrangements that have become obsolete, and yet are still extant — the institutions which have become inadequate, perverted, or corrupt — the thousand abuses, at once universally admitted and practically grievous, which clamour for attention, — would be that, in the amendment and rectification of these things, — in bringing up antiquated institutions to the requirements of the day — in meeting the actual social wants of the community — in keeping the machine of public life in decent and “tenantable” repair, — our statesmen might find ample scope for all their energy, ample occupation for all their time, ample field for all their benevolence, patriotism, and zeal, without opening the vexed question of the franchise, or undertaking to remodel the vital organ of the state.

Yet, fully admitting and strongly feeling all this, a closer observation of the matter will show us many reasons which make it impossible either entirely to

\* From the “Edinburgh Review.” Oct. 1852.

1. *Political Elements, or the Progress of Modern Legislation.* By JOSEPH MOSELEY, Esq. London: 1852.

2. *The true Theory of Representation in a State.* By GEORGE HARRIS, Esq. London: 1852.

shelve or long to postpone the question of Parliamentary Reform. The consideration of it has been recommended in a speech from the throne; the official Whigs, as a party, are pledged to entertain it, and when in power must bring forward some measure on the subject; if the Tories are in, the Opposition look to it as a natural and certain battering-ram for ousting them from office; and if a neutral or "fusion" administration should be formed, the public will expect them to be prepared both with a creed and a policy upon this matter. Moreover, there is an active and influential section of politicians in parliament who look to a larger infusion of the democratic element as the only means through which they can hope to carry out the schemes and systems of policy which they have at heart: one man is bent on "cheap government;" another is resolute for University Reform; a third is devoted to stamping the principle of isolation on our foreign policy;—and all believe, rightly or wrongly, that it is only by greatly increasing the Radical strength in the House of Commons that they can hope to attain their ends. Out of parliament, again, there are many energetic demagogues who have their own peculiar aims, and who are willing to move heaven and earth to procure an extension of the suffrage, in the confident belief that they will be able to command and direct the votes of the newly admitted electors. Finally, a considerable portion of those who already possess the franchise are desirous of its extension to those below them, in the hope that, in those whose claims to a participation in their privileges they thus advocate with such apparent generosity, they will find ready and certain allies.

While these various motives combine to create a strong and numerous party in favour of a new Reform Bill among the more advanced or extreme politicians, other considerations induce many of the more cautious, con-

servative, and philosophic of our public men, to look upon such a measure as not wholly undesirable. Though loth to run the risk of evil even for the sake of admitted good, and though they feel that our representative system may be said to do its work well, in a coarse rough way, and on the whole to produce in practice a tolerably decent and serviceable aggregate result, yet they are, on the other hand, conscious that it contains, as at present constituted, much that is imperfect, some things that are indefensible, and not a few that are absolutely noxious; that it presents many vulnerable points, many handles for ill-disposed assailants, which it were well for the sake of public peace and safety to remove; that in its periodical action it gives occasion to much suffering and to much sin which, for the national honour and well-being, ought, if possible, to be abated; that the elective franchise is now possessed by many unworthy men, used for many unworthy purposes acted upon by many unworthy influences; that it is often indefensibly withheld, and often unequally, sometimes unwisely, allotted; — and, on the whole, that many most beneficial amendments might be introduced not only without danger to the stability of our constitution, but to its manifest strengthening and consolidation. Altogether, then, we may regard it as a settled point that the subject must be faced, not shunned; the problem must be solved, not evaded. And if so, there can be no doubt that it much concerns the national welfare that it should be considered in a thorough, not a perfunctory manner, and should be treated not conventionally but philosophically, and with a constant reference both to the fundamental principles of our social organisation, and to the ultimate purpose which it is the desire of all parties to attain.

In a previous paper we endeavoured to trace the changes in the constitution and action of the House

of Commons consequent on the Reform Act of 1832, and to demonstrate, in opposition to the common democratic theory, that the elective franchise was not a right inherent in every man by virtue of his residence in a free country, but an instrument for the attainment of a national end. We touched briefly on a few of the objects to be kept in view in any new plan of Representative Reform, and on some of the dangers to be feared from seeking that reform in what appeared to us a radically wrong direction. In recurring to the subject now, after so short an interval, we wish to develop rather more at length some of the considerations then cursorily noticed, and to offer a few suggestions which it appears to us ought to be familiar to, and be well considered by, the public mind, before we can with safety or with profit adventure on the field of a second Parliamentary Reform. We do not expect for the more novel of these an immediately favourable reception, or a prompt and early acceptance; we know that in this country whatever is new and without the range of ordinary precedent is, at first sight, startling and repellent;

“But, bolder grown, familiar with its face,  
We first endure, then ‘study,’ then embrace.”

It is not till a proposition has been long before the nation, has by time and juxta-position worked for itself a place in the popular thought, has ceased to be a sudden and discomposing visitor, and has become a well known and accustomed guest, that it has any chance of obtaining a fair consideration and a patient hearing. In the public mind of England seeds require to lie long before they germinate; but if a competent period be allowed them, and if they are really recommended by any inherent truth and value, their day of growth and favour is certain to arrive, and their victory is all the surer and firmer for its long delay. The

propounder of a strange idea, or the proposer of a novel expedient, is at first looked upon as wild; if he persist, he is voted a bore; but if his idea or plan be really good, and if he is endowed with the requisite degree of pertinacity, his turn comes and his triumph is achieved.

It is one of the most marked characteristics of the national mind—and one which operates strongly to blind us both to the position in which we stand, and the direction in which we are drifting—that we continue to live in the ideas and to repeat the formulas of our ancestors, long after the circumstances which gave to those ideas and formulas their sense and meaning, have entirely changed. We still retain the habit, naturally and inevitably generated by our historical antecedents, and to a great extent still just, of connecting the reform of abuses and the redress of grievances with the progress and preponderance of the popular element in our constitution; and we forget that “the progress of the popular element” signifies a very different thing now from what it meant in 1832. This is the first point which we wish to impress upon our readers. Before the first Reform Bill, the vast proportion of the middle classes were excluded from any share in the representation. The House of Commons was returned in an overwhelming proportion, *first*, by the counties, where the electors were mainly either landed gentlemen, or small forty-shilling freeholders, a considerable proportion of whom were dependent upon, or influenced by them; *secondly*, by close or rotten boroughs which elected the candidate named to them by the aristocratic patron or proprietor of the place; *thirdly*, by boroughs which were entirely in the hands of the government for the time being; and *fourthly*, by large towns whose electors were sometimes pot-walloppers, but oftener freemen or burgesses, a privileged and limited class, whose votes were, for the most

part, either always on sale or under the undeniable influence of the municipal authorities. It is obvious, that under such a system the selection of the House of Commons would be almost exclusively in the hands of the aristocracy and gentry, and those of the town classes whom they could influence or control; and it is notorious that it was so; the aim and operation of the Reform Act of 1832 was to take it, to a great extent, out of the hands of these parties and place it in that of the *middle* classes. This was effected, partly by the complete or partial disfranchisement of those boroughs which were the admitted private property of the great and noble, and whose members they appointed as directly as a patron presents a clergyman to his incumbency; partly by the abolition of scot and lot voting; and partly by the extension of the franchise to 10l. householders in the representative towns. It was proposed still further to promote the same object by the *disfranchisement* of those town voters (the old freemen), who were notoriously under the influence of the higher ranks, as it had already been promoted, in anticipation, by Sir Robert Peel's clauses for disfranchising the lowest and most dependent class (the forty-shilling freeholders) in Ireland. The purpose and intent of the act of 1832, therefore, was simply to give the franchise to the middle class—to *place the command of the representation in the hands of the entire aggregate of the educated portion of the community*—from the intelligent tradesman and thriving farmer up to the princely landowner and the wealthy merchant. As far as it touched the lower or operative classes at all, its operation was to disfranchise, not to enfranchise, them. Thousands were disfranchised (through Schedule A.) by the bill as it actually became law: thousands more were intended to be disfranchised by the measure in the far preferable form in which it was originally propounded,



on the ground of their notorious corruptibility or dependence. Thus, to state it broadly, the operation of that celebrated plan was to curtail the representative power of both the higher and lower orders in favour of the middle ranks. The "popular element" in our constitution, which it so unquestionably increased and made preponderant, was not that of the masses or the working men, but of the intelligent, cultivated, and propertied people below the ranks of the aristocracy and gentry, but above that of the labouring poor. The transfer of power was not from those who had property and education, to those who had neither; but from the men of large property and opportunities for refined culture (aided by their serf-like and dependent vassals) to the men of competent means, moderate education, and acute and shrewd, but by no means, on the whole, of enlarged or comprehensive intelligence.

Now, a new Reform Bill, it is plain, may be so framed as to be either a continuance and carrying out, or a reversal, of this policy. A further disfranchisement of certain small and corrupt boroughs would be the former. So would a measure to enfranchise lodgers of the class of shopkeepers and those above them. So would a measure to confer the franchise on all who pay direct taxes—supposing taxation to remain apportioned as at present. So would a measure (if one could be framed,—of which we are very sanguine) extending the suffrage to the *élite* of the working men—to those among them who have given proof or presumption of the possession of that property, education, or intelligence which entitle them to take rank with the middle classes. So, possibly, as farmers become more independent and leases more general, *might be* a measure lowering the franchise in counties from a rental of 50*l.* to one of 25*l.* But any material reduction of the present borough qualification—any reduction large

enough to produce any marked change or have any very decided operation in regard to numbers as numbers—would (it is not difficult to perceive) be a reversal of, a reaction from, a direct antagonist to, the policy of the first Reform Bill. It would take the command of the representation out of the hands of the classes in whom that law had vested it. The measure of 1832 was at once *conservative* and *popular*: the measure we are speaking of may be just, wise, and necessary (as to which we here offer no opinion), but would assuredly be at once *democratic* and *retrogressive*.

Now, there can be no doubt that the education of the people has advanced since 1832: school instruction has been more generally diffused, and its character materially raised; books have become much cheaper and are more widely spread; savings have multiplied, and property has been acquired by many formerly who had little or nothing\*; while political action and discussion have considerably sharpened and serviceably trained the faculties of the mass of the population. Their conduct on several trying occasions during late years, has shown this change in a strong and favourable light. All classes have participated in this improvement: the lowest class, *perhaps*, as much as any. To assume, however, that a 7*l.* or a 5*l.* householder *now* is, therefore, on a par as to intelligence or property with a 10*l.* householder *then*, and is in consequence an equally desirable recipient of the franchise, involves a fallacy, which a little reflection and observation will enable us to clear up. And to act upon this assumption in any new movement toward representative reform, would involve results, as we shall proceed to show, which it may possibly be right to encounter, but which it is to the last degree important should not come upon us as a

\* The deposits in Savings' Banks, which were under 14,000,000*l.* in 1831, had reached 28,000,000*l.* in 1851.

surprise, but should be encountered, if we resolve to encounter them, with our eyes open.

In the first place, the 10*l.* franchise drew a broad, arbitrary, and decisive line of demarcation between the two great divisions of the urban population—those who did and those who did not possess accumulated property—those who did and those who did not live by their daily labour. It is true that this line may not have been drawn precisely at the right place, and that in many towns it might have been more fitly placed 2*l.* or even 3*l.* lower; but still the rough effect and probably the general intention of it was such as we have described. On the one side of the line lay all the upper and middle classes, the gentry, the professional men, the shopkeepers, the publicans, the small tradesmen; all who might fairly be assumed to have some political opinions and some competent education; all who were not dependent on the will of a master—all who lived upon the income arising from accumulated property, or upon the proceeds of industry and the profits of trade as distinguished from the daily or weekly wages of labour (a rough distinction unquestionably, but still an intelligible one): *on these the franchise was conferred.* On the other side lay those whom, for want of a better designation, we must speak of as the working classes, (acknowledging at the same time how incorrect the epithet is when used as a distinctive one)—the operative, the artisan, the mechanic, the agricultural labourer, who worked for individual or associated employers, and who, as a rule, possessed no accumulated property: *from these the franchise was withheld.* The only individuals properly belonging to the lower orders, who under the Reform Act of 1832 exercise the suffrage, are those few mechanics or artisans who have raised themselves so far as to live in a more expensive house than is customary among their class,—

the freemen of old boroughs, and the really forty-shilling freeholders of counties.

Now, as we have said, in many towns the arbitrary line then drawn might be fixed somewhat lower, so as not only to maintain the same demarcation between the classes, but even to effect this demarcation still more accurately than at present. For example, a *5l. rating* is generally equal to, or indicative of, a *7l. or 7l. 10s. rental*; and a *6l. rating*, of an *8l. house*, and so on; and these dwellings (in the smaller towns at least) are commonly inhabited by those who can scarcely, according to our definition, be said to belong to the labouring classes. The few facts, however, which we have been able to collect, and which we chiefly owe to Mr. E. Baines, seem to show, that in the manufacturing districts at least, a franchise based upon a *5l. rating*, or a *7l. rent*, would at once open the door to a new, and a very numerous class. It appears that such a franchise would raise the number of registered electors in

Leeds	-	from	5,200	to	10,000
Bradford	-	-	2,694	„	6,776
Halifax	-	-	1,084	„	1,434
Huddersfield	-	-	1,020	„	2,000
Sheffield	-	-	4,000	„	7,500
Liverpool	-	-	15,820	„	30,000
Glasgow	-	-	12,500	„	30,000
Manchester	-	-	12,000	„	25,000

All this, however, is beside the mark, and in no degree invalidates the essential proposition, the broad fact, which we desire to elucidate and impress—viz. that, although national education has been greatly improved, and intelligence spread among all ranks since 1832, yet *a 10l. householder, and a 5l. householder, now, as then, represent wholly distinct classes*; and that to lower the qualification from the one figure to the other, would not be, as is often assumed, simply to admit to the franchise

large numbers *now*, of the same sort, position, and character as were admitted *then*, but to admit precisely people of the sort, position, and character who were *excluded* then;—a step not to be taken, it is obvious, without a clear comprehension of its bearing, and a full consideration of its consequences.

Nor does it in the least signify, as affects either the principle or the ultimate results of the measure, what is the precise figure at which we now fix the franchise-giving rental. If the qualification be lowered *on the ground* that it ought to be lowered as education spreads downwards, and as the lower orders become better instructed and more intelligent, then, since this process is always going on, it is obvious that the whole principle of universal, or at least of household, suffrage is conceded; and the rest is merely a matter of time and preparation. The argument goes the whole length of the assertion, that as soon as the labouring classes shall have reached the average degree of intelligence and education fitting for, and attainable by, their class—as soon as they are, as we all hope in time to see them, intellectually what labouring men should be—they will be entitled to, and must be endowed with, the elective franchise. If the 8*l.* householder now is on an intellectual level with the 10*l.* householder twenty years ago (which we by no means intend to dispute), it is equally certain that, if we do our duty as a nation and as citizens, the 5*l.* householder twenty years hence, will be on a par with the 8*l.* householder now; and, therefore, whether or not the application of our principle admits the mass of the working classes to the franchise *now*, there can be no question that it will admit them *then*.

Their admission, therefore, *if the principle be sound*, is a political fact to be faced either now, or in a few years hence. Moreover, it will be allowed on all hands, that this admission, when conceded, must be honest and

*bonâ fide*. What is granted in name and theory, must be granted in reality and in practice. To endeavour to deprive the people, by a side wind, of a privilege, power, or function, which we have formally conferred upon them, or to attempt to hamper and control them in its exercise, would be neither safe, feasible, nor decent. They must, therefore, be admitted to the franchise under arrangements which will secure them against any undue influence in the exercise of it, which will make them genuine and *bonâ fide* possessors of it on their own account, not the mere proxies, puppets, and representatives of others.

Now (as we showed fully in a former Paper, and need not therefore enlarge upon now), since the working classes are, and under the existing arrangements of society will always be, more numerous than any other class in the community, and probably than all the other classes put together, it follows that such an admission of them to the franchise, as is involved in the principle we are considering, whether we call it universal suffrage, household suffrage, or "complete suffrage," would not merely admit them to a share, and a large share, in the representation, but would throw the entire, or the preponderating, control over that representation,—in other words, the supreme power of the state—into their hands. Have, then, those reformers who laid down the principle contemplated this legitimate deduction from it? and are they prepared to accept it?

There is, no doubt, one description of reformers who have perhaps never fairly faced this result, but whose doctrines, nevertheless, will not allow them to shrink from it when plainly placed before them. Those who base their arguments upon abstract right and naked arithmetic; to whom the will of the numerical majority is sacred; and in whose estimation one man is as good and as competent as another, and his claim to an equal



share in the government inherent and indefeasible,—will of course maintain, that the mere circumstance of the working classes being the most numerous, entitles them, in that exact proportion, to the lion's share in the representation. Consequences with them are nothing: principle is everything. It is idle to talk of dangers, however vast, imminent, or certain, to men who take their stand on what they consider the inexpugnable entrenchments of justice. With these reasoners we have at present no controversy; we consider that we stormed and demolished their positions in our former Paper.

There is another class of reformers equally prepared to defend the principle which we have shown to involve "complete suffrage," even if the practical result should be, the handing over the election of the House of Commons to the lower and more ignorant classes of the community. Not that in their hearts they believe these classes to be really the fittest for that solemn function; not that they conceive that, good or evil, it is their inalienable birthright; but they suppose that they would be at least as honest and unselfish as the present possessors of the franchise, and they assume further, that the undeniable ignorance and incompetency, relative or absolute, of the great mass of the lower classes, would be corrected and compensated by the leaders they would choose. In other words, this section of the advocates for an extension of the suffrage confidently believe, that *they* would be able to guide, dictate, and control the votes of the new electors; that the enfranchised masses would be in their hands like the passive potter's clay; that they would be to them obedient pupils, docile instruments, whose blank ignorance they might inscribe with their own doctrines, whose principles they would be permitted to form and fashion in their own mould, and whose short-sighted impetuosity and shallow follies they would at all times be able to compress and curb.

Men who entertain expectations like these, must have read the history of the past to little purpose, and the living history that is before their eyes, to still less. They would, perhaps, guide the masses only as long as their objects were identical, and their plans marched side by side. They would lead them only as long as they were going the same way. The moment they wished to pause or turn aside, or retrace a false step, or avoid a dangerous advance,—the moment that, by the attainment of their own purposes, they were changed from innovators into conservatives,—the moment they began to think and urge that “enough had been done,”—that instant they would be cashiered by the followers whom they flattered themselves they would have been able to control, whose more vehement tendencies they had hoped to keep in check, and whose ulterior designs they had imagined themselves acute enough to detect, and strong enough to thwart. Other leaders more “up to the times,” less resistant to the “pressure from without,” would be installed in their places; and they, like their predecessors, would be left stranded on the shore, discarded and forlorn, to show how far the tide of democratic action had swept past them. When was it ever otherwise? When was a democratic party ever led by the moderate among its ranks for more than the first few steps of its career?

But our present remarks are not intended for either of these sections of the great army of representative reformers, but for those who, believing, like ourselves, that an extension of the suffrage is both just, desirable, and necessary, are yet anxious that that extension should be so arranged as to be defensible, beneficial, and safe; who, believing that our electoral system is to be valued only as an instrument for the attainment of good government and the maintenance of our ancestral liberties, would deem no change an improvement which

endangered those cherished ends. And it is to these, our fellow-labourers in the liberal cause, that we address the question: Are they prepared to concede a principle which involves, either now or at a future day, and by progressive and inevitable steps, the *transfer* of the representation into the hands of the poorest, the most numerous, the least instructed, the most excitable, and the most misleadable, class of the community?

Now, we will suppose the labouring classes to be as adequately educated as we are all of us endeavouring to make them, as well trained in their social and moral duties, as they would be if Church and State had always done their duty by them, as familiar with political discussions as a habit of reading the newspapers in their spare hours can render them;—though the first is still a distant and problematical perspective, and the latter may not be altogether the most desirable occupation of their scanty leisure. We will assume, moreover, that the social aspect of Great Britain has been so far improved, that the mass of the population is no longer necessitous, envious, or discontented; that their living has ceased to be either precarious or inadequate; that hopeless poverty no longer renders them eager listeners to any project, eager advocates for any experiment, eager promoters of any innovation;—all which we some day hope to see. Still, when this “blessed change” shall have passed over the troubled waters of society, and educated light and order out of gloom and chaos, the main fact will remain unaltered and unalterable; the working classes will still be only one of the many orders which constitute a well-organised community; their real interests, as seen with the eyes and from the position of a Superior Intelligence, will not, it is true, be different from the real interests of the other classes, but *their views* of those interests will be different; moderately worked and amply instructed as they may be, *compared*

*with their present case*, they will still and always be the *least* leisurely and the *least* instructed, *compared with the other sections of society*; the highest culture will not be theirs; the deepest and knottiest problems of national life must remain insoluble by them; the most profound and comprehensive ideas of policy demand for any due appreciation and conception a knowledge and a meditation which circumstances must place permanently beyond their reach; and therefore, to sum up the whole, it never can have been the purpose of Providence, nor can it conduce to the welfare of man, that the basement class of the social edifice should override and overrule all the others — that “those who toil should govern those who think,” — that those who labour with the hands should have the supremacy over those who labour with the brain.

Besides this injustice and reversal of the natural order of things, Universal Suffrage, or any extension of the suffrage which should deserve the name of “complete,” exposes the state to two dangers, which at first appear to be opposed to each other, but which in reality are identical in their origin, and not very different in their ultimate results. Both are equally fatal to liberty and to high civilisation. One leads to tyranny directly, the other leads to tyranny through re-action. The first danger is, that the populace of electors will be used and led by demagogues; the second is, that they will be used and led by despots. The first risk is proclaimed by every page of history, and is now again faintly shadowed forth in Switzerland and America. The present position of France is perhaps the best modern exemplification of the second. Both act precisely in the same way — by swamping the propertied and educated classes. On the first it would now be superfluous to dwell: we will make only two or three observations, and pass on. Those who point with triumph or who look with hope to the

success of the great popular experiment in America — who appeal to it as showing how safely and how beneficially the concerns of a great country may be carried on under a government chosen by universal suffrage — cannot, we think, be men whose observation is very close or patient, or whose standard of requirement is very high. We yield to none in a full and generous appreciation of the many excellences and the wonderful energies of our Transatlantic brethren. The United States may well be proud of their Past, and sanguine as to their Future. But with them, it must be remembered that the experiment has been tried under a combination of circumstances almost inconceivably auspicious. They were of Anglo-Saxon race; they were always free; for generations they had been inured and trained to self-government; they were descendants of the religious and self-controlled and self-denying Puritans; and they were pressed upon by none of those social or material difficulties which beset older and more populous countries. With them every one was well off, or might easily become so. Yet even there, is it not too unhappily notorious that the tone of public morality has been gradually lowering since the days of Washington? that the standard of national policy is far less wise and worthy than it was? that the ablest, purest, and noblest of her sons habitually retire from public life, or are snubbed or neglected if they enter it? and that their greatest statesmen are now never chosen for the highest offices or honours of the state? Since the departure from the stage of the old race of revolutionary worthies, America has had three statesmen of high capacity and European reputation, — Clay, Calhoun, and Webster: and all have aspired to the Presidency in vain. — The politics of Switzerland have been so little noticed amid the exciting movements of the greater states surrounding her, that few are aware of the recent triumphs of pure democracy

in many of her cantons, nor how deplorably both her character and her prospects have been compromised in consequence. In Geneva every politician known under the old *régime* has disappeared, and every man of official talent or experience has been dismissed. In Berne it is not much better. In the Pays de Vaud, as in Geneva, the government has fallen into the hands of the extreme radicals, and the more moderate and better educated classes have been entirely *superseded* by the populace and its leaders. The consequences will take some time to develop themselves. Meantime the tendency and the operation are obvious enough.

As far as England is concerned, we have a very high opinion of the strong sense and general good feeling of a great proportion of our working classes, but nothing we have seen will warrant the belief that they would escape from being led and *exploité* by most unworthy demagogues. They are ignorant, and they feel themselves to be so; they are lazy, and habitually leave it to others to think for them; they are mistrustful of their superiors in rank, and are apt to listen eagerly to those who would foster and take advantage of that mistrust; and they belong to a people whom we do believe to be, with all their practical talent, the most gullible in creation. Moreover, few among them have either moral courage or independence enough to stand alone or run counter to the presumed opinion of their fellows. The proceedings in the late strike of the Amalgamated Engineers were not encouraging for those who hoped much from the progress of education among the people. The parties to it were, as a body, the most intelligent, skilful, and well-conducted of our artisans, in good circumstances, in receipt of high pay, many of them well educated for their station, and accustomed to read and to discuss. They knew well the almost invariable history of such attempts; the certain misery and evil such attempts



always entail; the defeat in which they nearly always end. Their demands were, in some points, obviously oppressive and unjust to their fellow-workmen; *a great proportion of them* (we believe the majority) *were averse to the contest, and were conscious both of the folly and the wrong.* Yet they suffered one or two self-elected leaders (who are always forthcoming as soon as money has been accumulated by these bodies) to make use of them as completely as they themselves make use of the tools of their handicraft; to put forth in their name demands which they knew could not be complied with; and to absorb and waste in this foolish strife the funds which their self-denial had laid by for times of natural pressure and distress. They permitted all this with their eyes open — or half open, and chiefly because they wanted the resolution to say "No," when the more bustling and noisy of their fellows were saying "Yes." And yet these men were unquestionably, as far as wealth and intelligence are concerned, the *élite* of our operative classes, and precisely those whom the next step downward in a rental qualification would endow with the franchise: and their franchise would, we may assume, be used by Mr. W. Newton exactly as he has used their funds.

Let us turn to the other operation of universal suffrage, as exhibited by France. The contemporary history of that country is, indeed, a perfect mine of political wisdom; but, like those of Old Mexico and Peru, little worked by the natives. To foreign students and standers-by, however, the lessons it affords are as invaluable as they are various. While reading her annals for the last sixty years, we feel as if we were admitted into some vast dissecting room, such as that over which Majendie once presided, where physiological experiments are carried on on a gigantic scale, and where operations of every conceivable degree of cruel ingenuity are per-

formed on the unhappy victims, for the benefit of a watchful and excited audience. Of all the curious lessons which France is now reading to the European world, none is more curious and important than that regarding the effect of universal suffrage. She shows that this which, in the popular creed, has always been represented and valued as the great instrument and security of freedom, is, on the contrary, one of the surest means and sanctions of tyranny. She holds it forth to the world as the MODERN BASIS OF DESPOTISM—firmer, broader, craftier than the old one. She proves that it is not only no guarantee against oppression: it may be made its heaviest and sharpest weapon. Far from bringing hope to an injured and trampled nation, it may put the blackest seal on its despair. In place of securing equal justice and general prosperity, it may simply pass the flattening iron over society, and present the most flagrant specimen of class-legislation which the world has seen. Universal suffrage is likely to bring about anywhere, and promises to bring about in France, an alliance between an ambitious chief, and the ignorant, improvident, excitable masses of the population, to the oppression, discomfiture, virtual disfranchisement, and possible spoliation of all other sections of the community.

For, as we have already pointed out, the working classes—daily labourers for daily bread—form everywhere, more especially in energetic, industrious, progressive nations, the vast numerical majority of the population. They comprise nine-tenths of the *numbers*, but only a fraction and segment of the *nation*. For every nobleman, there are a thousand peasants; for every squire, a thousand labourers; for every master manufacturer, a thousand artisans; for every student, statesman, philosopher, journalist, or poet, a thousand incompetent and uncultivated units; for every wise and

just man, a thousand ignorant, a thousand selfish, a thousand rash. A ruler, therefore, who allies himself to the many, and ignores the few—who appeals to the judgment, flatters the feelings, falls in with the prejudices, fosters the superficial interests of the *nine-tenths*, and neglects the wishes, despises the opinions, and sacrifices the welfare of the *one-tenth*—may be strong in the strength of overwhelming numbers, and consecrated by the choice of disproportionate millions, and may yet be, not the *Elected*, but the *Reprobated*, of the NATION—may be supreme Chief in defiance of the solemn and earnest disapproval of whatever is good, whatever is great, whatever is wise, whatever is truly noble and just, throughout the length and breadth of the land. He may have been chosen in an open contest; the ballot may have been genuine; the election may have been fair; the majority in his favour may have been enormous; his rule may thus have every conceivable sanction which the *vox populi* can throw around it:—and yet he may be the relentless enemy, the merciless suppressor, of all that is noble and chivalrous in the brave and long-descended; of all the finer fancy, and the loftier intellect, which have enriched the literature and extended the influence of the nation; of all the spirituality which would purify her faith, all the high science which would beautify and regenerate her life, all the unfettered enterprise which would augment her wealth, all the true grandeur which would illustrate and dignify her history; of all that freedom of the mind, without which national existence is mere stagnation, dishonour, and decay. He may array against his broad-based throne every man who is honoured for his virtues, every man who is celebrated for his genius, every man who is valued for his services, every man who in any department has shed light and lustre on the age; he may sacrifice the loftiest moral to the lowest

material considerations ;—but so long as he panders to the passions, so long as he enlists the cupidity, so long as he aggravates the foolish fears and delusive hopes, so long as he studies the momentary physical interests, of the masses,—so long will universal suffrage throw its halo of impure and fallacious sanctity around him ; so long may he call himself the chosen representative of the nation, though execrated and disowned by everything that gives to the nation life, reality, and reputation. When Louis Napoleon seized his power, he had on his side, we cannot doubt, not only the vast majority of the lower orders, but many of the middle ranks, some among the higher, and nearly all the commercial class. Many of these he has already alienated and alarmed ; and it is more than probable, that the ulterior measures which he contemplates, or may be driven to contemplate, may alienate still more. But when all these have fallen away, six millions out of seven millions of voters will still remain. Louis Napoleon will still be the “Elect of France”—so far as numbers can make him so. Will, then, the liberal Press, which universal suffrage has enabled him to gag ; will the genuine Republicans, whom it has enabled him to put down ; will the theorists and politicians, whom it has empowered him to imprison and to banish, sing its praises or proclaim its sacred inviolability again ?

France is not the only country where this inherent vice of universal suffrage has been shown ; nor is Louis Napoleon the only ruler who has formed an alliance with the lower orders of society, to enable him to control the more respectable of the working classes, and the middle and higher ranks. In many countries, and at many periods, the *prolétaires* have been found the ready tools and the natural support of despots. Seeking only for material comfort and personal well-being, content as long as they feel no pressure, and are threatened with

no deterioration in their social state, untroubled by aspirations, and indifferent alike to political ameliorations and to mental freedom,—they have generally shown little disapprobation of the tyrant who never oppressed or spoliated *them*, and little sympathy with sufferers under an iron rule which, towards them, was sedulously softened. The Lazzaroni at Naples, have stood steadily by Ferdinand in all his worst atrocities. His crimes and cruelties never pressed on *them*; as long as they could obtain a mouthful of maccaroni or of water-melon, what was it to them that nobles, because they had thirsted after the forbidden cup of liberty, were thrust into loathsome dungeons? What did the censorship of the Press, or the prohibition of foreign books, signify to people who could neither read nor write—whose only necessity was food—whose only intellectual luxury was listening to a story-teller?—In Austria, too, and in Lombardy, the labouring people were generally well-off, and the government took care to keep them so. They cultivated their fields in peace, the taxes were not burdensome to them, they sat under their vine and fig-tree when the labours of the day were done, the police-spy and the insolent gendarme seldom interfered with them, or if he did, they were too much inured to submission to resent the interference. The leaden despotism which crushed or maddened their superiors—which condemned men of high capacities and lofty aspirations to fritter away life in the *café*, the casino, or the ball-room; which sent men of fiery genius to antiquarian research, as the only safe channel for their energies; which punished intellect with civil incapacity, and earnest speech with exile or the dungeon; which trod out every spark of that vitality which alone makes nations great, and human history a progress—was a matter wholly out of their range of interest or concern. Naturally enough, they had no sympathy

with wants which they had never felt, no tolerance for discontent which they could not comprehend. So, where national antipathies did not step in, they for the most part stood by while the battle was fought out over their heads, or joined zealously in defence of a tyranny under which *they* had never suffered, and the very nature and pressure of which was to them a mystery.

These reflections might easily be pushed further. But our present purpose was merely to show the defect and fallacy inherent in the common estimate of universal suffrage; and how easily the most ruinous and pestilential tyranny may be built upon a basis which at first sight seems the freest and fairest of all.

But further, the question of lowering the franchise requires to be considered with reference to another and very important class of facts. Our meaning admits of being very concisely stated. For a long time past, we have, unconsciously, been burning the candle of the constitution at both ends: *our electors have been usurping the functions of the House of Commons, while the House of Commons has been monopolising those of the parliament.*

Originally the Supreme Parliament of the realm consisted of three co-ordinate powers, King, Lords, and Commons—of which the House of Representatives was by no means the predominating authority. The free and full consent of each of these powers was necessary to the decision of all legislative questions, while administrative matters lay unreservedly with the Crown. The Sovereign was paramount, the Nobles were uncoerceable—the Peerage was the real *Upper House*: the House of Commons had a vote and a veto, but no more. *Now*, that House has, for a long course of years, been gradually drawing to itself the whole power of the state: disguise it under constitutional fictions as we may for the sake of decency or self-deception, it has become not



only preponderating but virtually supreme, in legislative matters, and it exercises a direct, undeniable, and most powerful influence even in affairs of administration.

Originally, too, the function, theoretical and actual, of the electors was that of choosing men qualified, by knowledge of their interests and participation in their point of view (identity of *stand-punct*, as the Germans would express it), to *represent* them in the great council of the *tiers-état*, and qualified, by capacity, experience, and character, to take part in the government of the realm. Their choice actually fell, as it was intended by the constitution that it should fall, upon the most extensive landed proprietors, the most successful and liberal merchants, the most renowned lawyers, the sturdiest patriots, the most experienced politicians. — *Now*, electors, generally and increasingly, are guided in the selection of the men they send, by the known or professed *opinions* of the candidates; they avowedly, and on system choose, not the ablest nor the most high-minded, but those whose views on that particular question or set of questions which at the moment happens to be uppermost in the public thought, most nearly harmonise with their own; and an elector who votes for an honest and able opponent in preference to a shallow and scampish partisan, is vulgarly held to have deserted his colours and tarnished his character. The constituencies no longer give their attention to the selection of a member qualified to consider and decide any questions that may be brought before the House in which he is to sit: they themselves consider and decide these questions, and then look out for a man to support and *faire valoir* their decisions in parliament.

Thus, not only has the balance of our triune constitution been materially disturbed, but the original *rationale* of representation bids fair to be entirely lost. In place of selecting men, constituencies pronounce upon measures;

in place of choosing representatives to discuss questions and decide on proposals *in one of three co-ordinate and coequal bodies*, the aggregate of which decree what shall be enacted or done—electors consider and decree what shall be done themselves. It is a reaction towards the old Athenian plan of direct government by the people, practised before the principle of representation was discovered.

Now, it is clear at a glance that both these changes point in the same direction, and suggest a similar quarter in which to look for counteraction. To examine, comprehend, and form a sound judgment on a political measure or a legislative proposal, obviously requires a more thoughtful, intelligent, and instructed class—in a word, a more highly-qualified class—of electors, than would be needed to decide upon the relative fitness of two given and known men to be representatives. Hundreds would be able to pronounce with tolerable shrewdness whether Mr. A. or Mr. B. was the cleverest or the worthiest man, whose opinion as to the augmentation of our standing army, or the retention of our Colonial Empire, or the re-adjustment of our system of taxation, would not be worth a straw. The more our electoral functions resolve themselves into deciding on measures instead of selecting men, the higher are the qualifications needed for the exercise of the electoral franchise. *Yet the cry is for a lowering of the qualification.*

Again, if the House of Commons held only the same position and wielded only the same limited and co-ordinate power as in old times, we might admit into it a larger infusion of the democratic element not only without alarm, but possibly with welcome. But since it has become predominant, if not omnipotent—its decisions subject to no appeal, its decrees liable to no reversal, at most only to a cautious and short postponement—it is obvious that higher wisdom, greater sobriety, purer virtue, and

wider vision, than before, are imperatively requisite in those who are to frame it. In precise proportion as the powers of the state become more and more concentrated into the hands of one supreme and uncontrollable assembly, in that proportion does it become a matter of vital concern to the greatness and the safety of the state that the choice of that assembly should be in the hands of the most competent, the most independent, and the soundest portion of the people. Yet it is just when this great and continuous revolution has been consummated that we are asked to throw the choice of this condensed and inappellable authority into the hands of a more uneducated, dependent, deceivable, and excitable class than have ever yet possessed it.

Of these three processes—the aggregation of the supreme power in the House of Commons, the usurpation of the deliberative and pronouncing functions of that assembly by the constituencies who elect it, and the lowering of the social and intellectual qualifications required from electors—any one singly might go forward without peril and possibly with great advantage: the combination of all three—the concentration, that is, of the supreme authority in the hands of the lower classes of the population, wholly or in preponderating measure—presents a perspective of danger from which simple reflection and the experience of other countries should teach us to recoil in time. It is to emulate the mistake, and to invite the fate of France.

Having so far cleared our way, by an ascertainment of the quarter in which the improvement of our representative system should *not* be sought, we are in a position to approach the practical problem of Parliamentary Reform, and to suggest the character and direction at least, if not the specific details, of measures for the extension, purification, and amended distribution of the franchise,—measures which, while attended by no

danger and assimilating readily with what exists, shall be felt by nearly every one to be wide, substantial, and salutary improvements in the constitution of the House of Commons — founded in justice and consonant to the most far-sighted policy.

The problem to be solved is, *first to widen the basis* of our representation by admitting to the franchise all who ought to be admitted — all, that is, who are qualified to exercise it for their country's good ; — *secondly, to purify* it, by excluding all who, from incompetency of whatever kind, ought to be excluded ; — and *thirdly*, so to *distribute* it as to render it as fair and complete an organ as practicable of the various interests and elements which compose the nation.

I. The first and most obvious arrangement which suggests itself, is to confer the suffrage on *all* whom the existing constitution pronounces entitled to it, and competent to exercise it. In other countries enjoying a representative government, every man who possesses the qualification is, *ipso facto*, placed in a position to exercise it. In Belgium, for example, every man who pays a certain amount of direct taxes has a vote ; and he gives that vote wherever he happens to reside at the time. Now, we have decided that occupation of a 10%. house shall be held a good and sufficient qualification for the franchise. Yet how inadequate a proportion of the 10%. householders throughout the country really possess the franchise ! They are all deemed competent to hold it ; but unless they chance to live in one of the 185 Parliamentary Boroughs, they have no opportunity of exercising it. Those who live in the 268 unrepresented towns with more than 2000 inhabitants, or in the many more towns and villages below this limit, are virtually disfranchised. They have not the privilege which, nevertheless, the law declares that they ought to have.

There are two modes of rectifying this anomaly. The

one commonly suggested, and the favourite one with the radical school, — that of dividing the country into electoral districts of equal population, — was so fully discussed in the preceding paper, that we need not restate the objections to it here. The other plan is to extend the 10%. qualification to counties, by which means *every* householder (to the requisite value) throughout the land would possess a vote; if he resided in a city or borough he would be upon the urban list, — if he resided in a small town, or a village, or an isolated dwelling, he would be upon the county register. The only objection we can hear of to this plan is, that in the country districts and in hamlets a 10%. occupancy generally includes some land, and would not therefore indicate the same social station as the living in a 10%. house in town, and that it might lead to the creation, for the sake of augmenting landlord influence, of a numerous and dependent class of tenant voters. But, in the first place, the occupier of a 10%. house in villages and small towns, belongs to a decidedly higher social grade than the occupier of a 10%. house in cities; and, in the second place, it would not be difficult to meet the objection, by requiring that the qualifying occupancy shall be, in the county register, a house, and not a house and land, or by fixing a sum which shall, as nearly as can be ascertained, be generally an equivalent to the 10%. occupancy contemplated by the present law. This, Lord John Russell's 20%. county franchise was, we imagine, intended to effect.

There is a third way, not, indeed, of reaching, but of approximating to the desired result, which, also, was contemplated in Lord John's measure, viz. by combining a number of the unrepresented towns in the returns of a member. This measure we shall have to recur to presently; for the moment we will only observe, that it would very imperfectly attain the end we are now con-

sidering, since numberless villages and hamlets would see their inhabitants still excluded from the franchise.

A second mode of extending the basis of the representation, in a manner strictly conformable to the principles of our existing arrangements has been suggested, and is, we think, open to no objection. It is, of course, desirable, and is admitted to be so by every party, that *all* educated men shall be voters; the difficulty is to name any ostensible qualifications which shall include them, and them alone. But though we cannot frame a criterion which shall include all, there is no reason why we should not accept one which will include a considerable number of whose fitness to possess the franchise there can be no question. We should propose, therefore, that the suffrage be granted to all *graduates of universities*, to all *members of the three learned professions*, to the *officers of the army and navy*, and to *masters of schools under government inspection*. This provision would give a most desirable addition to the constituency out of a class of men now very generally excluded as living in lodgings.

A third proposal, suggested, we believe, chiefly with the view of including middle class lodgers, namely, that of conferring the franchise on all who pay a specified sum in direct taxes, is, we are disposed to think, one of questionable advisability. In those countries, as in Belgium, where this forms the sole or the main qualification, the chief part of the revenue is levied in the shape of direct taxation. Every man above actual want pays direct taxes, and all persons of a certain class pay above a certain sum. It therefore forms about as fair a criterion of social position as can well be devised. But in England the case is different. Direct taxation yields only a small portion of our revenue, and reaches only a small class. Before the imposition of the income tax—which, in its present form, at least,



we cannot bring ourselves to regard as permanent,—this portion was very insignificant, and was, in nearly all cases, (with the rare exception of persons living in lodgings, and yet keeping horses, or using armorial bearings,) paid by parties already on the electoral register in virtue of other qualifications. To adopt the proposed plan of enfranchisement in England would therefore be not, as in other countries, to give votes to those who paid a certain sum towards the national revenue, but only to those who contributed that sum in a certain peculiar form. It would enfranchise not the amount, but the mode of taxation. Nor would it—if our subsequent suggestions be carried out—be needed in order to enfranchise any.

A more vital objection is, that it would make a man's possession of the suffrage dependent upon the financial arrangements of the session or the parliament. A whole class might be disfranchised in a single night by a vote of the House of Commons, which had not the most remote intentional reference to the question of electoral qualification. Already one direct tax has been swept away—the window duty. The income tax may go any session. If, as fiscal science becomes more studied and better comprehended, it should appear that any extension of direct taxation beyond its amount in 1841 is undesirable, and it should be limited accordingly, numbers whose vote depended on the payment of income tax would lose their constitutional privilege by a side-blow not aimed at them. And if, as is possible enough, the house tax—variable in amount—and the duties of horses and carriages, be the only direct taxes ultimately retained, a taxation-franchise would reach only those who would be on the register already in virtue of their dwellings. And it seems scarcely wise to make a man's electoral qualification depend upon a

fluctuating and annually questioned or modified criterion.

But the knottiest and most important part of the problem still remains to be approached,—how to give to the working classes their fair and desirable share in the choice of members of parliament, and at the same time no more than his share;—how to admit such an infusion of the democratic element into our representation as shall be just, beneficial, and unattended with danger, but at the same time real and not illusory. Some, starting from the premises that *representation of classes* is the idea that lies at the foundation of our system,—that the peers, the clergy, the gentry, the yeomen, the burghers, and the men of learning are all specially represented (theoretically at least),—and that the labouring classes alone have no representatives, because at the time when the constitution was consolidated into its present form they were serfs and villains, not freemen, and therefore not recognised as an integral order in the state,—have suggested that the omission should now be supplied by assigning to the labouring classes a certain number of *special* representatives, to be chosen by them exclusively; and that the vacancy created by the disfranchisement of those boroughs which might be found too corrupt, or too insignificant, to retain the privilege of returning members, should be thus filled up. The proposal is not devoid of a certain *primâ facie* appearance of fairness and workability. But it is open to one objection, which lies upon the surface, and is in our judgment a fatal one. Members thus specifically returned by the labouring classes would often be working men themselves, and, whether they were so or not, would naturally regard themselves as entrusted with, and appointed to guard over, the interests of these classes, alone, or by preference. On general questions it is possible enough

that they might be divided in opinion among themselves, and some take part with one section of politicians, some with another. But on all subjects and measures directly bearing, or supposed to bear, upon the welfare and condition of the poor; on the amount and distribution of taxation; on the remuneration of the higher offices of state; on the reduction or increase of the army, and generally on all matters connected with economical expenditure; on matters of imperial policy, so far as they directly involved questions of expense; and on proposals closely touching industrial and social considerations; it is probable, nay, nearly certain, that these special representatives would vote together, and form a compact and influential party in the legislature. And as on most of these questions they would almost inevitably take the most superficial and short-sighted view,—as they would have a strong tendency to oppose present outlay for a future and distant, though certain advantage, and so to adjust taxation as to make it fall as far as possible away from their constituents,—cases would not unfrequently arise in which all the members for the working classes would be arrayed on one side, and nearly the whole residue of the House of Commons on the other,—an unseemly and perilous antagonism, the full weight and significance of which the minority defeated in parliament would not be slow to blazon to the world. Even now the member for the West Riding is not slow to remind the member for Tavistock: —“I represent 30,000 electors, you are the nominee of only 300.” But how much worse would the case be where 50 men could say to 500, “You, the representatives of thousands, are opposed to us who are the representatives of millions;—you, the delegates of the privileged classes, can overpower us who are the chosen of the people of England;—you, the nominees of certain small sections of the community, herd together

in defence of your constitutional ideas and your selfish interests; we, who speak unanimously the sentiments of the vast majority of that community, of the aggregate of the nation itself, stand forth to protest against the monstrous inequality." Such an arrangement, followed as it would be by such language on every occasion which provoked it, would loudly proclaim, and most perniciously aggravate, that disseverance and hostility of classes, that separation of society *into horizontal layers* (as a recent writer has well expressed it\*), which, of all the features and tendencies of the condition of England, is, perhaps, the most uncomfortable and menacing.

Others have suggested a scheme for admitting the labouring classes to the franchise, and conferring upon them a due share of political power, which at first sight appears much more plausible and safe. It has, they say, long been felt, and has over and over again been shown, that the only way in which universal suffrage, or any near approach to it, can ever be admissible, would be through an adoption of the filtering process of *double election*. The various advantages of such a plan are obvious. It is based upon the indubitable truth, that hundreds of thousands who are wholly incompetent to decide upon the merits of a political measure, or the qualifications of a member of parliament (whom they know only through his speeches and addresses), are yet perfectly competent to fix upon some one of their neighbours or friends fitted to exercise the decision for them. Hundreds of thousands who would choose very bad *representatives* might choose very good *electors*. It is true there are no English precedents for the plan, but it has more than once been put into practice in France; it was the soul of the celebrated constitution

\* See a Paper in the "Westminster Review," for July, 1852, on the Tendencies of England.

proposed by the Abbé Siéyes in 1799, and partially adopted by Napoleon; it is the mode in which the President is elected in the United States, and in which the Storthing or House of Deputies is chosen in Norway. If desirable, the mere absence of precedent should not stand in the way of its adoption here. There are now in round numbers, and allowing for duplicates, about a million of electors on the register. To this number it is proposed to add 100,000 *electors to be nominated by the working classes*, and, on mere proof of such nomination before the revising barristers, to be placed upon the registers of their respective districts. The voters for these electors, to include all (paupers, convicts, minors, or women excepted) who are not upon the general register. By this plan, it is argued, you would at once place one tenth of the representation in the hands of the now unenfranchised operatives exclusively, which could not be despised as a mere trivial and worthless concession; the system of double election would be tested both as to its practical feasibility and its results; and the country would have an opportunity of seeing what sort of selection was made by the labouring classes, and of thus gaining some valuable hints for future guidance; since much canvassing, bribing, or intimidation would scarcely be worth while merely in order to *obtain a place upon* the register, attainable by the frugal and intelligent in so many easier ways. So that the electors chosen might fairly be assumed to be the *bonâ fide* unbiassed choice of the masses—the men they most trusted, appreciated, and admired.

Nor, it is contended by the advocates of this plan, need any danger be apprehended from the class of men likely to be chosen. It is probable enough that the demagogues of the populace, and the most forward, noisy, and active of the artisans, would be among the first of those selected for the trust; but these could

only form a comparatively small proportion of the 100,000, and they would find their elected colleagues less willing to submit to their dictation, and more quick to detect their egotism, than the great body of the working men. If the majority of them turned out, as we believe they would, to be the more intelligent, sober, and respectable of the labouring poor, a great point would have been gained; the most numerous body of the community would be fairly associated with the upper ranks in the work of legislation, and the ground would be laid for a better mutual understanding; and an act of justice would have met with its appropriate reward. If, on the other hand, as some predict, these "select men" should turn out worthless and corrupt, and disgrace themselves either by cupidity or folly, their influence with the lower, and therefore their formidableness to the higher classes, would be irretrievably lost. It is only in Ireland that demagogues can retain their hold on popular obedience and regard in spite of repeated falsehood and proved delinquency.

We concede the soundness and weight of nearly the whole of the above considerations. Yet there is an objection to the plan which is a most formidable, though we are loth to pronounce it a fatal, one. The immediate operation of the arrangement, would be to bring the representation *within one step of universal suffrage*, and that step an easy and an obvious one. It concedes the franchise to those very masses from whom it is your fixed purpose to withhold it,—but calls them to exercise it under restrictions which place them at a serious disadvantage, as compared with other possessors of the privilege. It forges a weapon, and prepares a mechanism which, by the simplest modification, may, at any crisis of popular excitement, be turned against its framers, and used in direct contravention of its original intention. The whole body of the labouring classes



will have been authorised and accustomed to vote ; and from voting for one set of representatives to voting for another,—from voting for electors to voting for members, the transition would naturally suggest itself, and might be instantaneously made. You would have enacted a wise and salutary law, which the omission of a single clause would convert into its opposite.

The third plan for enfranchising the better portion of the working classes in towns, which first occurs to every mind—viz. a simple lowering of the present rental or assessment qualification—loses all its apparent advantages when closely examined, as we explained on a previous occasion. In the manufacturing districts, seven-eighths of the operatives live in houses paying from 2s. 3d. to 3s. weekly rent, or from 6l. to 7l. a year. If you lower your qualification so as to include these, you enfranchise the mass ; if you go so high as to exclude these, you reach scarcely any of the working men properly so called ; and by no means always those you wish to reach. Again, the same limit which would enfranchise *many* in Manchester, Leeds, or Birmingham, would enfranchise *all* probably in Marylebone and the Tower Hamlets, and *none* in Taunton, Leominster, or Hereford. It would make enfranchisement depend, not upon belonging to a certain station, but on the accident of residing in a certain place, which is one of the great practical defects of the present system. We must, therefore, look out for some other plan, which we think is not far to seek, nor difficult of application.

No one doubts the fitness of many operatives, and even peasants, for the exercise of the suffrage, as far as honesty, intelligence, and good dispositions are qualifications. Few, who know them well, will be disposed to deny, that a *selection* from among them would give us a purer and more independent constituency than the lower class of ten pound householders and small county

freeholders,—a constituency at least as shrewd, and far more sturdy, in their views, far more individual in their modes of thought, and more open, also, to unselfish considerations and generous sentiments. To this we can bear strong testimony; and we bear it not only willingly, but earnestly. The difficulty is to *get at* these “select men”—to enfranchise the *élite*, without enfranchising the mass.

Now, those among the working classes who have accumulated property, have, in doing so, given proof of qualities which will, in the great majority of cases (and with such only can we deal in legislative measures), make them fit and safe depositaries of the franchise. We need not enlarge upon this. The principle is already admitted in our present system, and indeed lies at its foundation; but it is partially applied, and imperfectly carried out. If an operative lays by 50*l.*, and invests it in the purchase of a 40*s.* freehold, the constitution pronounces him fit and qualified to vote. If, again, he expends the 50*l.* in moving from an 8*l.* to a 10*l.* borough residence, the constitution pronounces him fit and qualified to vote. But if he expends his 50*l.* in the wiser mode of purchasing an annuity for his old age, or a life policy for his widow or his children, or in the more lucrative investment of guaranteed railway shares or debentures, the constitution excludes him as disqualified. That is, *our present franchise law judges of a frugal operative's fitness for the suffrage, not by the circumstance of his having saved, but by the mode in which he invests his savings*,—manifestly an indefensible criterion. Nay, it does more; it is scarcely too much to say that it makes his qualification depend on his having selected a comparatively unwise channel of investment. This clearly calls for rectification. We propose, therefore, that every man who can prove, to the satisfaction of the revising barrister, that he has, and has had for

twelve months, the sum of at least 50% of his own, invested either in government securities, or in the savings' bank, or in the purchase of an annuity, present or deferred, or in the purchase of a reversionary policy for his family,—shall be entitled to be put upon the register for that year. We do not anticipate any objection to this provision, nor any material difficulty in working it out, nor any loophole for fraud which does not exist in most other cases, and which a revising barrister may not detect and baffle. It may be urged, that it is partial and unjust to confine the franchise-giving quality to these four modes of investment; especially as these are not the most generally in favour with the operatives, who commonly prefer placing their money in clubs of their own. This is perfectly true; but the answer is, that these four are probably the only modes of investment of which the state has any cognisance, the only quite safe and certain ones, and the only ones in the proof of which it would be easy to discover and prevent fraud and collusion. If others can be pointed out equally enjoying those advantages, by all means let them be added to the list.

Now this provision would, in the first place, at once enfranchise large numbers of the worthiest operatives; it would point out the mode by which any who desired the franchise might attain it; it would stimulate to patient economy and to cautious investment; and it would connect indissolubly in the popular mind the possession of the franchise, with the possession of some, at least, of the qualities which give an earnest of fitness for its exercise. It would stand upon the statute-book as a provision to which we might quietly point the attention of any who complained of their exclusion from a share in the representation,—“Prove your competency, and there is a self-acting proviso for admitting you.”

But there is still another class of operatives whose superiority and consequent fitness for the franchise is still more incontestibly proved, and whom the last-named qualification would not always reach,—*those*, namely, *who are placed in authority over others*. Such are overlookers in factories and mines; foremen and heads of departments in iron foundries and machine-making establishments, head-gardeners, who have labourers under them, and others in similar positions. All who are thus appointed to situations of command, have been selected in virtue of superior capacity, steadiness, integrity, or education; and must, in order to have attained such situations, have given proof of mental or moral qualifications, above those of the mass of their fellow-workmen. They are precisely the class whom we desire to distinguish from the rest; who, as leaders, are likely to influence others; and whose opinions on public questions and public men, it would be really valuable to know. We can conceive no objection to conferring the franchise on this class, except the practical difficulty of defining its members, and deciding on their individual claims. But these are matters for the management of the revising barrister: the same searching investigation which determines the validity of other claims, would amply suffice to settle any disputes or embarrassments as to these new ones.\*

By these two provisions, we should place upon the

\* It is important to observe that in the absence of specifically-sought information, we are greatly in the dark as to the operation of most new legislative enactments. It is impossible to do more than form a plausible conjecture as to the numbers and sort of men whom these two provisions would admit, or as to the working of any other suggested clauses. Perhaps, before legislating at all upon the subject, it would be advisable to issue a commission of inquiry, to investigate the probable bearing and *modus operandi* of different franchises, both actual and proposed. A mass of reliable knowledge might thus be obtained which would do much towards guiding and enlightening our future action.

register precisely that portion of the working classes whose views it is desirable to know, and whose claim to a participation in the electoral task, it is impossible to gainsay; we should secure to the side of constitutional liberty the *real chiefs* and heads of the labouring masses, —not their nominal, self-appointed, agitating *leaders*: and we shall manifest a *bonâ fide* desire and intention of admitting to the franchise all whose claims to it, on the score of fitness, we are able to ascertain. It is true that, though we should thus disarm many of the arguments of Radicals and Chartists, and separate from them many of their parliamentary supporters, and place conservative reformers in a broad, strong, and defensible position,—yet, we should scarcely have silenced, nor perhaps altogether met, the demands of the *masses* for admission to political power,—if indeed any such native, indigenous, genuine demand ever took its rise among them. They might still say, and with some show of reason,—“ You have selected for the exercise of the franchise—for participation in your privileges—precisely those members of our body who are most like you and least like us; who are most peculiarly under the influence of the higher classes; and whose sympathies and connection with our body are shown to be impaired, or in the way to be impaired, by their endeavours to rise out of our body. We ask for representation for the masses, and you offer representation to those who already differ from the masses in some essential points. We ask the franchise for the *employed*, and you assign it those who are stepping into the ranks and are infected with the sentiments of the *employers*.”

Our reply to this, if it is to be satisfactory, must be not evasive, but direct. That reply is, briefly, an appeal to the fundamental idea lying at the basis of our constitution, and at the very core of the national character, which is not that of democratic equality, but of distinct

and privileged, but *open* orders. We ground our polity upon, and owe our safety to, two great principles,<sup>1</sup>—*retaining the powers of the state in the hands of the less numerous, but more select, more cultivated, and more competent classes ; and, making ingress into these classes accessible to all.* The union of these two principles is safety : their disjunction would be injustice and ruin. The old *régime* in France fell by denying the second : the new *régime* has never been able to maintain itself, from having negatived the first. Let it be our fixed resolution to avoid with equal care either error.

II. The purification of our representative action is practically a more difficult achievement than enlarging its basis. Everybody avows and feels that the franchise is now possessed by many who, on every ground, ought to be debarred from such a function ; some because they are dependent, some because they are corrupt, some because they are incompetent through ignorance, some because they are wholly indifferent to all political considerations, and are therefore guided solely by personal ones. But it is no easy matter to take away a privilege from any one to whom it has once been granted, except on actual proof of delinquency, and such proof it is not easy to obtain. On the part of many liberals, there is a most unphilosophic desire to extend the franchise as widely as possible, with a regard solely to numbers, and not at all to quality. It was this feeling which led to the interpolation of the Chandos clause, and the retention of the old freemen, in the first reform bill. On the part of many of a different way of thinking, there is a strong disposition to keep upon the register all the most unfit classes, viz. the indifferent, the corruptible, and the intemperate ; precisely on account of their unfitness. Those who dread democratic influence and popular delusion, see an element of safety in the existence of a



class of voters, whom wealth can always buy, and whom power can always bully; and they are not the less obstinate in their resistance to all attempts to purge away this body, that they can neither avow the grounds of their proceeding, nor discern the fallacious nature of the security they would retain. And on the part of the possessors of the franchise themselves, it is natural that those who regard their votes as a saleable property, not as a solemn trust, should cling to them with all the tenacity of avarice; and they are sure to tie down their representatives to the maintenance of their lucrative and abused privilege. But as the arguments of the two last of these parties cannot be ostensibly brought forward; and as the ground taken by the first is cut away by the considerable and *bonâ fide* extension of the suffrage, which would form the basis of the reform we are contemplating, we may hope that a proposal to purify the constituencies, by removing the anomaly of the old freemen, might meet with more success than it hitherto has done. Those among them who are really desirable possessors of the franchise, will be entitled to it through other qualifications.

Again, we need most especially some simple, effectual, inexpensive, continuously-acting, and, as far as may be, self-acting, machinery for disfranchising any voters and any boroughs which can be proved to be corrupt. Had this been provided at the time of the Reform Bill, as an indispensable condition of its successful and beneficent operation, and been steadily and conscientiously worked and watched over by the legislature since; and *had the conventional morality of Parliament, on the subject of disfranchising-bills, been altered and corrected as it was on the subject of election committees*, it is hard to say to what a pitch of comparative dignity and purity our constituencies might not, by this time, have arrived. It is not now too late to rectify this, though unquestionably

many valuable years have been lost, and many boroughs have fallen from their pristine innocence. Two things are required in order to attain the object. It must be enacted, that any borough which is proved before the appointed tribunal to be as a whole, or in the large majority, corrupt, or to be so completely under the influence of one or more proprietors, that no doubt can exist as to the non-independence of the great body of the electors, shall *ipso facto*, and systematically, be disfranchised; and if the appointed tribunal be a parliamentary one, it must be *understood*, as it is now in the case of election committees, that members must act judicially, that is, must obey their consciences, and respect their oaths. If this were arranged, no great difficulty would be found, and no great expense need be incurred, in ascertaining the real rights of each case; evidence to *satisfy* would be easily attainable; and those who are cognisant of parliamentary feeling know well, that the only reason why gentlemen there sometimes act with the strange moral lubricity which so astonishes us laymen outside is, that it is understood that they may do so. Before 1835, no member hesitated to disregard his oath, and vote black white, if he chanced to be balloted on an election committee, any more than an Irish juryman or an Oxford "Head" hesitates on similar moral *tours-de-force*: since that date, a senator would lose both his reputation and his self-respect, were he to act according to the past, rather than the present, code of honour. The perjury which was sanctioned by a common understanding then, is repudiated by the same common understanding now.

The next point is to disfranchise the individual voter who has betrayed his trust. At present, the severity of the penalty against the convicted recipient of a bribe, makes convictions almost unattainable. Except in moments of the utmost exasperation, men scruple to

enforce a fine of 500*l.* (which in most cases would be absolute ruin or indefinite imprisonment) for an offence which public morality has not yet learned to regard as a very heinous one. In this, as in so many other cases, the enormity of the infliction denounced secures the impunity of the offender. We see no objection to retaining this punishment against the *briber*; but, as against the *bribee*, we would substitute simple disfranchisement for the future, on sufficient proof being adduced in the registration courts to satisfy the revising barrister. You would thus purify the register, improve the constituency, disarm the ill-doer, and visit the offence with an appropriate and proportionate, instead of a vindictive and excessive, penalty. We are aware of the difficulty which always attends the production of satisfactory evidence of bribery: we are aware, too, that intimidation is often the worse, the most extensive, and the most demoralising evil of the two, and that proof of this in individual cases, clear enough to justify disfranchisement, would be almost unattainable; but the measure we suggest would *go some way* towards the purifying purpose we have in view; and we must not reject any means on the plea that they are not omnipotent or sufficing in their simple and unaided operation. We must be content to achieve our object by the cumulative and corroborating aid of a variety of agencies.

We know the reply that will be made to us by our radical friends:—"Why beat about the bush for indirect modes of securing the free exercise of the suffrage, when one single and obvious mode lies in your path? Why eschew the ballot?" We will not enter on this vexed question here. We could add nothing new to the arguments which have been adduced on either side; nor could we urge those arguments in clearer or stronger language than our predecessors. Without,

therefore, attempting to answer the cogent claims which have been brought forward on behalf of secret voting, —without urging the unconquerable feelings of aversion to it, which are the arguments of minds more instinctive than logical, but often far safer guides than that of the logician, from their delicate tact, and the unerring correctness of their moral appreciations,—we take our stand on the position in which all practical men—all except the most incurable *doctrinaires*—will agree; viz. that if the object can be attained with tolerable completeness by any other contrivances, a disagreeable dilemma and a hopeless controversy will have been avoided.

With this view we strongly urge the adoption of a mode of taking the votes at parliamentary elections, for which we have the warrant of a recent and most successful precedent, which would greatly diminish bribery, which would perceptibly alleviate intimidation, and which would entirely put an end to the riot and outrage which so frequently disgrace the contests in our large electoral bodies; which would enormously lessen the expense of elections; while at the same time it would virtually and greatly increase the numbers, as well as elevate and improve the character of our popular constituencies. The plan is that now practised at the election of boards of guardians, and other parochial contests in England, and, with some small modifications and improvements, in Scotland. It consists simply in taking the polling booth to every elector, instead of, as now, carrying each elector to the polling booth. A couple of days before the one appointed for the election, a voting paper with the names of all the candidates, and simple directions as to the mode of filling up the paper, is left at the house of every ratepayer; and after the lapse of one clear day, the paper is called for by the appointed parish-officer. In Scotland, the collector is

provided with a box, with a slit in the lid, into which the paper is dropped (by which any tampering with the return is avoided); and the commissioners require that every paper shall be returned, whether filled up or not, with the view of compelling the *attention* at least of the ratepayer to the appeal made to him, however he may choose to treat it. These arrangements would be just as applicable to parliamentary, as to parochial, arrangements, with a very slight modification. We propose, therefore, that immediately after the nomination (the publicity of which will secure all the popular excitement constitutionally desirable), a paper containing the names of the candidates (and accompanied with the addresses they have put forth) be left at the house of every elector by a sworn and appointed officer, who shall call again for the same the next day, or the day but one after, as may be determined on. He shall receive the papers into a sealed box or bag, and shall deliver them to the returning officer. On this plan each elector, when he returns home at night, finds the important document awaiting him; he considers the merits of the candidates, he reads their addresses, perhaps he consults his wife and family, or his neighbours; and then he places his name opposite to that of the man or men of his choice, and folds up the paper ready for delivery to the collector.

Now, the manifold advantages of this plan have been clearly shown and fully set forth by the Poor Law Commissioners in their first and fifth Reports.\* The

\* "By the voting paper on which the elector is to record his vote in his own handwriting being left during one or two clear days at his residence, he is enabled to give his vote in the most free and deliberate manner, undisturbed by the importunities of canvassers, or the tumult and clamour of the polling booth; by the voting paper being called for at the residence of the elector by a responsible officer, and by him being taken to the returning officer, the elector is saved from



effects which would flow from its adoption in Parliamentary elections are as follows:—

*First.* It would entirely avoid the riotous proceedings now so generally and disgracefully attendant on our popular contests. The election day might be as quiet as a Sunday. Disorderly and ill-disposed people might,

the necessity of losing his time and neglecting his business in attending the polling booth; it being deemed the best economy that one officer should attend as a collector at the residences of several hundred voters, rather than that several hundred voters should leave their homes and occupations to attend at the station of one officer—a poll clerk. By this mode the necessity of extraneous expense and excitement, in order to induce bodies of electors to incur inconvenience, insults, or annoyances of various sorts, are saved to both parties. Hitherto this mode of election, which differs from all others in use in this country, has given general satisfaction. Moreover, it has continued to be marked by the greater number of votes being given than have been obtained for the like objects under any other form of election. In the greater number of instances of contested elections the number of votes polled have been more than trebled, which we consider equivalent to the relieving of all the additional votes from the loss and inconvenience previously attendant on the exercise of the franchise. The expense in the larger parishes was greatly below that of the ordinary elections by poll. Nevertheless, we have found that the expense of the first election arrangements might be advantageously reduced, and several inconveniences sustained in the larger parishes obviated.

“The expense, however, cannot be estimated fairly, except in reference to the savings effected by the new mode of taking the votes. In one parish, where the election was severely contested, there were 10,000 persons whose votes were taken. One with another, not less, perhaps, than half a day would be consumed by a voter in quitting his occupation to go to the polling booth, give his vote, and return, which was necessary before the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act; one with another, the value of the time consumed by each voter would, perhaps, be under estimated at half-a-crown. The aggregate value of the time required from the voters would not therefore be less than 1,250*l*. In registering new claims, and in the formation of a new machinery, much expense was incurred; but the permanent expense of printing the voting papers, and other incidental charges for completing the election, would probably not exceed 100*l*.



if they pleased, still get up a row on the nomination day, though it is not generally on these that disturbances occur; but as far as the polling goes, the great occasion for violence and tumult would be entirely taken away. No more rough scenes which quiet men shrink from; no more hootings and peltings which now terrify so many timid men from the poll; no more broken heads; no more interference of the military; no more Six-mile Bridge affairs: every man would be able to record his vote in peace, and we should no longer have to blush before foreigners for the disorder attendant on our freedom.

*Secondly.* The intimidation practised on voters by the dread of actual violence or most unpleasant scenes on their way to the polling booth — no inconsiderable part of the whole — would be entirely defeated and evaded. Intimidation by landlords, by employers and by customers would, it is true, be left much where it is now. But bribery would be enormously diminished. Bribery is now chiefly confined to *close* contests. When the majority is pretty decidedly against a candidate, it is not worth his while to bribe: when the majority is decidedly in his favour it would be superfluous. It is where the result is doubtful, and where a certain number of purchasable votes will turn the scale, that corruption is resorted to. Now, in many cases, this is not ascertainable till far on in the day, when the course that matters are taking is known by the publication of the hourly lists. Accordingly, the great proportion of the bribery is actually perpetrated in the last two or three hours, when the number of votes which remain to be polled can be pretty accurately known. But by the proposed mode of taking the votes, all this would be avoided. No one would have the least idea how the election was going till the returning officer opened his papers and cast up his columns at the close of the poll.

If, therefore, a candidate was disposed to bribe he must bribe a couple of days beforehand, when he would be very much in the dark as to whether he was not throwing away both his money and his conscience gratuitously or ineffectually.

*Thirdly.* The cost of elections would be enormously curtailed. Even the legitimate and inevitable expenses—those of the polling booths, poll clerks, and check clerks—would be considerably reduced. Instead of the staff now required, no one would be needed except the one returning officer and the representatives of the several candidates who might wish to be present as a check upon him, and the distributors and collectors of the voting papers. From six to twenty men, according to the size of the borough, might do the whole work. But the great expense of election is the carrying the electors up to the poll, and keeping open public-houses and committee-rooms for collecting them previously. They are generally taken up in carriages, and, according to the testimony of experienced electioneering agents, 80 out of every 100 voters are taken up at the expense of the Candidate for whom they vote. The time is past when 50,000*l.* or 60,000*l.* used to be spent at once at this pastime; but even now the evil is often most enormous. In one of the metropolitan boroughs the cost of the last election was about 12,000*l.*, though only 8000 voters were polled,—being an expense of thirty shillings a head. By the plan proposed nearly the whole of this wasteful outlay would be avoided.

But this is not all. We must add to the cost of elections the loss of time, and of the earnings of time, by all the industrious voters of whatever rank, whose day is broken in upon, and generally wholly lost, by going up to the poll. Considering their numbers, and the class to which they belong, we cannot estimate the

average loss to the electors, from the interruption of their regular avocations, at less than five shillings for the day or half day wasted. Strike off from the 500,000 voters belonging to the contested places, the idle whose time is of no value; and to the million of money which a general election is calculated to cost the Candidates, you must add about 125,000*l.* sterling more which it costs to the Constituents.

*Fourthly.* You would add almost incalculably to the number of voters, *i. e.* of those who recorded their votes.

We showed, on a former occasion, that there was great reason for believing that of those possessed of the suffrage not more than from 50 to 60 per cent. took the trouble to exercise it, at least in the larger constituencies; and we have since had sent to us a statement of the number who voted in the contests on the last election, which fully confirms our estimate; though, as it is in a great measure conjectural, we do not insert it. Now, were the plan of voting papers adopted, and were these papers, as in Scotland, returnable whether filled up or not, every one would vote except those who had some distinct and positive motive for abstaining. Those who now do not vote because it takes them away from their business, or because it would lose them a day's work or a chance customer, or because they are lazy, or because they do not like to encounter a hot crowd, or a noisy and possibly hostile mob, would then be left without any excuse for such unpatriotic abnegation of their functions. But we are not left to conjecture as to the effect which the change would produce on the numbers who exercise the franchise. In parochial contests the number has often *trebled* since the introduction of the new plan. In one union, of which the return is now before us, the numbers polled on the old system in 1847, on an occasion of great parish interest, when very considerable efforts were made on both sides, were 531 against 497, or a

total of 1028. In 1852, under the new plan, the corresponding numbers were 742 against 596, or 1338.

But, *fifthly*, a still more important point would be gained. The new votes—those which are now lost, but would then be given—would belong to precisely the members of the constituency whose votes we most desire to get,—viz. the industrious, the quiet, the retiring and the moderate. A great proportion of the votes now seldom recorded are those of men of business, merchants, manufacturers, bankers and tradesmen,—who will not or cannot leave their work, but who would vote as they went home, if the polling booth lay in their way, and was kept open after business hours. In London, Liverpool, and Glasgow, the number of votes thus lost is immense. We heard of one case at the last election where 800 electors of this description, who had delayed till the eleventh hour, came too late, and were shut out. In London this is one constant cause of the small proportion of the registered electors which decides the contests. Now, it is very well to say that men who are thus languid and lukewarm in the discharge of their electoral functions do not deserve to possess them; this is true enough; but these are just the men whom it is desirable, for the good of the country, *should* possess them, and exercise them too,—and therefore it is incumbent on us, and a matter of common sense, to make the exercise of them as easy as possible. The idle, the exciteable, the passionate, the bribable, will vote fast enough: we must smoothe the path to the poll for those whose counteracting influence the welfare of the state requires. And this brings us to the final and most pregnant observation, that the more we can secure the actual action of these men, *the less important and preponderating in an election do the lower class of voters, the bribable and the corruptible, become, and the*

*more effective and fatal is the blow you have struck at both bribery and intimidation.*

*Lastly.* The plan would effect the very desirable aim of *equalising electoral action* in times of excitement and in times of indifference and stagnation. Under the existing system, in periods of quiet and prosperity, when mens' reason and good sense may be expected to be paramount because their passions are comparatively dormant, and when, therefore, the opinions of our people would be unusually valuable because unusually deliberate and sober, it is next to impossible to persuade any considerable number of them to be at the trouble of recording their votes. But on all more turbulent and angry occasions, when some popular cry has been sent forth, or some epidemic prejudice aroused, when men are blinded by panic or warped by delusion, or rendered furious by suffering—far larger numbers flock to the poll, and those who go there are, many of them, precisely the men who, as far as the object of a calm decision is concerned, it is specially important should stay away. By the new mode of voting, on the contrary, the exercise of the electoral function would be made so easy, that the minimum of motive and of conscience would suffice to secure it; and we might count on a nearly equal number of votes—*i. e.* an equally general expression of public sentiment—whatever were the peculiar circumstances under which the election took place.

We have then here a plan which is no new or rash experiment; which has been in operation for many years with signal benefit in a case with which the analogy is nearly perfect; which will increase the *number* of actual electors nearly as much as most liberals can hope for; which will *raise the class, and improve the character* of the voters almost as much as we could desire; which will give us the judgment of



the constituencies in their cooler as well as in their wilder moods; which will greatly diminish both the motives to bribery and the relative numbers of the bribable; which will put an end to election riots and disturbances; which will materially mitigate one sort of intimidation and wholly preclude another; and which will so reduce the expense of elections as to render parliament no longer accessible exclusively to the wealthy and to the wasteful. Nay more. It would not only, to a great extent, supersede the motives for having recourse to the ballot; but it is an arrangement on which secrecy might, if found necessary, and *where* found necessary, be easily engrafted. In any case where intimidation was known to be habitually practised to such an extent as to vitiate the genuineness of the election, an order emanating from the designated authority (say, the Speaker or the Privy Council) could swear the returning officer and his two assessors to secrecy, and the object is attained at once, *pro hac vice*, and *in hoc loco*.\* The only parties from whom we anticipate any opposition to the plan proposed, are, *first*, the *routiniers*, to whom anything novel is startling and

\* Practical difficulties in working the plan may no doubt be suggested; but for all these experience would soon suggest remedies also. Domiciliary intimidation in the filling up of the papers might, by simply reducing the time between the delivery and the collection of them, be made to require such a staff of bullies as would render it practically impossible. Attested marks must be allowed at *first*, and might give rise to some abuse; but the number of those who could not write their names would yearly diminish; and ere long the refusal to accept marks in lieu of signatures might form a simple, self-acting, and justifiable educational condition. But the mode of meeting all these minutiae, and of perfecting the mechanical arrangements, is one of the points to which such a commission of inquiry as we have already suggested would naturally direct its attention. When the principle of the thing has once been cordially adopted, there will always be found men of practical experience to devise the requisite machinery.



shocking,—but their hostility, time and reflection will wear away;—*secondly*, the corrupters and corruptible of every class—electioneering agents, freemen, publicans, and other sinners—those who sell votes and those who buy them, and those who profit indirectly by the nefarious accompaniments of an election; but the opposition of these men has this inherent impotence about it, that it cannot be arrayed in a decorous or presentable shape;—*thirdly*, those who are of opinion that elections *ought* to be costly by way of giving appropriate influence to wealth and rank; but this argument, again, cannot be paraded in the face of day; and, *lastly*, those radical politicians who believe (and probably with reason) that the additional votes obtained by the alteration will not be recorded in their favour. Whether the hostility of these classes can or ought to weigh one atom in the scale when set against such an array of beneficial consequences as we have developed—which would make this single measure almost, if not altogether a greater Reform Bill than the first,—it will be for the nation, when appealed to, to decide.

III. The third point which would demand attention in a reform of our representative system would undoubtedly be the re-distribution of members, with a view to their better assignment among different interests and different divisions of the country. The great complaint among the more advanced of the liberal party, on this branch of the subject, respects the disproportionate representation of small towns, the retention, as parliamentary boroughs, of places entirely or predominantly under the influence of individual proprietors, and the non-observance of any fixed relation between population, or property, and representation. Now, on a careful review of the subject, we are bound to say that the current notions on these subjects appear

to us to have been hastily taken up, and, while containing an undoubted element both of sound doctrine and of true fact, to contain much exaggeration also. Fortunately a recent return made to parliament (No. 441.) enables us to lay before our readers a few considerations which may, perhaps, modify the opinions some of them have hitherto entertained.

In the *first* place, it may be conceded at once that if population, *i. e.* mere numbers, ought, or was ever intended, to form the basis of representation, it is strangely set at nought in our existing arrangements. But let us see what would be the result of a distribution of members according to population, and then reflect if we are prepared to approve such a result as equitable, or desire it as beneficial. At present in England we have 186 cities and boroughs scattered over the country, returning 321 members. If population were our guide in the assignment of these members, *one half of these*, or 163, would be returned by *only 20 towns*; of which 20 towns 3 would be in Lancashire, 4 in Yorkshire, and 8 would be Metropolitan *i. e.* either in Middlesex or close to it (as Southwark and Greenwich). Or, 129 borough members, or 40 *per cent of the whole*, would be returned by 3 counties. Again: 69 county divisions now return 144 knights of the shire. If population be taken as our basis (throwing out the represented towns), 9 of these divisions would return 43 members, or nearly one-third of the whole. Of these 9, 3, *viz.* Middlesex, Lancashire, and Yorkshire (West Riding), would return 28 knights, or 20 *per cent.* of the whole number sent by all England: that is, of the total 465 members (knights and burgesses) returned by England, *three counties would elect 157, or more than one-third of the whole.* A result which surely is scarcely defensible in theory, nor could be endured in practice.

*Secondly.* At present we may be said to have three

distinct sorts of constituencies,—*counties, small boroughs, and cities or large towns*. Each of these classes has a distinctive character of its own. Now, reckoning as *small boroughs* those under 10,000 inhabitants, we have,—

69 counties (or divisions)				
with a population * of 9,770,000 ; returning 144 members.				
114 large towns	-	6,660,000	„	206 „
72 small towns	-	480,000	„	115 „

From this comparison it would appear that the large towns have their full share of the representation ; since, if we add the small boroughs to the counties, on the supposition of their returning a somewhat similar class of members and containing a somewhat similar constituency, the comparison would stand thus :—

		Population.	Members.
Counties and small boroughs	-	10,250,000	259
Large towns and cities	-	6,660,000	206

whereas the proper arithmetical proportion for the cities would be 169 instead of 206.

Nor, *thirdly*, if we remark how large a proportion of our population reside in small towns, does the number of 115 members seem so undue an assignment to this class of the community, who are in some respects a characteristic class, differing alike from the purely rural, and the stirring and energetic city population. It is customary with the more extreme reformers to declaim thus : “ What a scandal that Honiton, with only 3500 inhabitants, should return as many members as Liverpool with 376,000 ; and Arundel, with 2750, as many as Salford, with 85,000 ! ” But the apparent scandal is wonderfully mitigated, if not altogether removed, when we observe that *every* Liverpool and *every* Salford is represented, but only *three* out of 60

\* Exclusive of represented towns.

Honitons, and only *one* out of 90 Arundels. *Every* town with more than 25,000 inhabitants is represented, but the *eighty-six* towns containing between 2000 and 3000 inhabitants, with an aggregate population of 227,000, *have only one member among them*; of the *fifty-eight* towns, with from 3000 to 4000 inhabitants, and an aggregate population of 212,000, only *three* are represented; of the *forty-four* towns, with from 4000 to 5000 inhabitants, and an aggregate population of 199,000, only *nine* are represented; and so on. The member for Honiton and the member for Arundel—if regarded, as they ought to be, as representing all the unrepresented towns of that size and sort,—have a constituency as numerous as that of Birmingham and Southwark.

*Fourthly.* Nor, if we can once shake ourselves free from the foreign idea that mere numbers ought to be taken as the basis of our representative arrangements, does the distribution of members among the manufacturing and agricultural districts appear nearly as unfavourable to the former as we are in the habit of assuming it to be, and of condemning it for being. For instance, we find that the four pre-eminently agricultural counties of Bedford, Hereford, Lincoln, and Essex, return only 33 members, while the four pre-eminently manufacturing counties of Lancashire, Cheshire, Warwickshire, and the West Riding, have 64 members assigned to them as their share. Cases exist, no doubt, which must be promptly rectified, of indefensible inequality; such as Devonshire, which has 22 representatives, and Wiltshire, which has 18. But passing over these two instances, and comparing the electoral strength of the more industrial, concentrated, and energetic populations (among which the reforming demand is supposed to be most loudly heard), with that of the rural and quiet districts (which it is pro-

posed still further to weaken), we find that *ten* of the largest counties of the former class return 143 members, and *ten* of the latter only 104. Thus:—

Lancashire - - -	26	Hampshire - - -	16
West Riding - - -	18	Somerset - - -	15
Sussex - - -	18	Lincoln - - -	13
Staffordshire - - -	17	Dorset - - -	14
Middlesex - - -	14	Oxford - - -	9
Northumberland - - -	11	Northampton - - -	8
Cheshire - - -	10	Herefordshire - - -	7
Durham - - -	10	Hertford - - -	7
Nottingham - - -	9	Huntingdon - - -	5
Warwickshire - - -	10	Essex - - -	10
	<hr/> 143 <hr/>		<hr/> 104 <hr/>

Although, therefore, we are fully alive to the necessity of dealing vigorously with the case of small boroughs, our opinion is not grounded on the alleged unfairness of allowing them their due share in the representation. If their constituencies were in general pure and independent, or any secure plan of making them so could be devised, we should regard them as an important and valuable element in our constitutional system. But the great majority of them are notoriously undeserving of the franchise, and those who know them best are least disposed to undertake their defence. The plan of combining a number of them into one constituency would be futile or beneficial according to the details of each individual case. If a close or a rotten borough were amalgamated with an open or a manufacturing town, much advantage might possibly result; if two or three corrupt or manageable constituencies merely united their iniquities, the evil of the existing state of things would only be spread further and rooted faster. We should propose, there-



fore, at once to reduce the 61 boroughs with fewer than 500 electors, and now returning 91 members, to *one* representative each. This would leave thirty seats to be disposed of.

In case of gross and general bribery, or clear dependence, being proved against any of these constituencies before the tribunal already hinted at it should be disfranchised, and its elective right transferred to such other towns as parliament might appoint. By this enactment a strong motive would be given to pure and decorous elections, while, at the same time, a standing provision will have been made for the purgation of the anomalies and impurities of our system, and for the gradual enfranchisement of rising cities. Thirty seats, however, would be at once at the disposal of the reforming legislature. Two of these we propose to allot to the London University, one to Glasgow, and one to Edinburgh, as an act of just liberality and popular concession, but also as a means of opening an access to parliament for that class of men who are by opinions or habits unsuited to popular constituencies, but who, nevertheless, would make most valuable senators, and from whom their former resource, close boroughs, has been cut away. The remaining twenty-six seats we would deal with in a somewhat novel manner.

There are individuals who under our present system either do not find seats in parliament, or find them with much difficulty, or obtain them only at the cost of some injurious fetters, or some suppression or modification of their real views, some damage, therefore, both to the purity of their conscience and to their power of usefulness,—whom nevertheless it is most important for the interests of the empire to have in public life. Either their manners are unpopular, or they have given offence to some local prejudice, or they



are too unbending to suit large and miscellaneous constituencies; or their views are too profound and comprehensive to be appreciated by such; or the subjects with which they are specially conversant, though of vital moment to the empire, are not of a nature to excite the interest of local bodies; yet in every constituency there are some electors who can appreciate their value. To take one illustration of our meaning: Sir James Graham is, by universal consent, about our ablest administrative statesman,—the statesman of all others whom sensible men of every party would most grieve to see excluded from parliament; yet he has never been popular with any constituency, has always found a difficulty in obtaining a seat, and has never (it is said) sat twice for the same place. Further, if parliament had been dissolved on the Papal Aggression question, though a minority in every constituency shared his notions, he would have been elected by a majority in none; and would either have lost his seat altogether, or have been obliged to stoop to the ignominy of an Irish Roman *clientèle*.

Again, the most valuable men, almost, whom we can have in public life, are the philosophic and eclectic politicians—a large sprinkling of them at least; men who can repeat the shibboleth and echo the watchword of no party; who are too conscientious and reflective to “go the whole hog” with any; who belong to one side by three points of their creed, but to the opposite side by the fourth; who, it may be, are zealous free traders when the Negro question does not come in to complicate the discussion; or who are Conservatives *quoad* the state, but reformers *quoad* the church; or who hold with the Radicals on practical and administrative, but dissent from them as to organic changes; who, in a word, think for themselves, *and think in detail and not in the lump*. Now, there are scarcely any con-

stituencies with whom such men can find favour; they are condemned as crotchety, subtle, and inconsistent; they are in the position of the "Ugly Duck" of Hans Andersen's tale, whom no one discovered to be an incipient swan; the conservative electors eschew them as reformers; the liberal electors snub them as "unsound" and not "thorough;" being "guilty in one point," they are sentenced as violators of "the whole law;"—of whom the world—that is the constituencies of England—is not worthy.

Again, questions connected with our Indian and our Colonial Empire will ere long become the most pressing and important with which parliament has to deal. Yet such is the state of feeling and knowledge, or rather the want of feeling and knowledge, prevalent on these topics in England, that mastery over them and sound views regarding them will be no effective recommendation to any local constituency; and the most complete *ignoramus* on these matters will be preferred to the ablest and justest thinker, if the first be "right," and the second "wrong," on a question of local, or passing, or party politics. We want, and shall want increasingly, representatives specially conversant with, and free to devote themselves exclusively to, *imperial interests*, hampered by no fears or pledges, and compelled to consult the narrow prejudices of no limited constituency.

Before the Reform Bill, close or nomination boroughs furnished men of this class with an avenue to parliament; since that date a few of the smaller and more manageable constituencies have answered the same purpose. But as any further representative changes will close this channel likewise, it is important to devise some adequate and honourable substitute. The proposed increase of members for learned bodies will do something, though not much, in this direction. Our

suggestion is this; it would at once and fully meet the purpose aimed at; and, to the best of our belief, is open to no objection, except its novelty. Let the twenty-six seats which remain to be disposed of be assigned to NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES, to be chosen as follows:—Let any elector who pleases require the revising barrister to remove his name from the *local*, and place it on the *national* register, which shall be separately published. When an election takes place, let the candidates for the national representation issue their addresses, and let the national electors decide upon their merits. The voting in this case might take place by written papers, signed and sent to the central office; each elector voting either for one candidate, or for three, or for all, as might on further consideration seem advisable.

By this arrangement, you would at once create a higher class both of electors and of representatives. Those who placed themselves on the national register, would be for the most part men of more thoughtful habits, more extensive information, and wider views than the mass of the enfranchised body. Those too, who, from being at issue with the overpowering majority of their fellow-townsmen or fellow-freeholders, found their votes utterly ineffective and thrown away in their several localities, would thus be enabled to transfer them to an arena where they would have a *bonâ fide* value. At present a Conservative elector in a borough where five-sixths of the voters are Liberals, or the converse, finds himself virtually disfranchised: his voice is that of one crying in the wilderness. You would secure a certain number of pure elections, degraded by no canvass, biassed by no mean personal motives, purchased by no unworthy compliances, attended with no undignified or indecorous concomitants, realising, in fact, something like the ideal of representation, and furnishing

a valuable nucleus of high example. And you would secure the presence in parliament of a class of men free to consider nothing but the public good, because undisturbed by fear concerning their future re-election, and confident in the capacity of their constituents to appreciate both their motives and their conduct.\*

Fully impressed with the growing extent and increasing population of our colonies, and the importance of attaching them to the mother country by every tie of interest and affection; feeling too both the justice and the wisdom of treating them as far as possible like integral portions of our empire; we have considered with some care the question of allowing them to send representatives to parliament, but are not on the whole inclined to think favourably of the scheme. A member to each colony or group, or perhaps two to the more important ones, would be the largest allotment we could afford. These men would come to the House of Commons naturally impressed with an undue and disproportionate idea of the importance of their respective constituencies in the balance of imperial concerns, and would demand more than their fair share of attention and deference; if pertinacious would be voted bores; if comparatively yielding would feel a sense of ill-usage and neglect, which they would not fail to communicate to the colony they represented; and in any case, with whatever respect they were listened to, would find themselves lost, swamped, and overlaid amid the vast majority of British members, and the more urgent *presence* of British interests. Their votes would be few, and their influence, save on special questions, little felt. Their fitting and far more effectual place would be in the *executive, not in the legislative* department of the state.

\* The suggestion here put forth was first made by a gentleman to whom the country is indebted for one of the greatest administrative improvements of our times.

The whole system of our colonial administration imperatively clamours for revision; and a governing board in which representatives from our colonies shall find an influential and recognised position, will probably be the solution of the problem.

No new Reform Bill will, we trust, be introduced to the consideration of parliament, without a clause conferring on the sovereign the right of nominating to *ex-officio* seats (without votes) in the House of Commons those ministers, being commoners, whom the public service requires should belong to that House. We have never heard any objection to this proposal of the slightest weight. No evil can be suggested as likely to arise from it; whereas the evil arising from the absence of such a provision is serious and constant. It not only limits the Queen's choice of her ministers, but it almost habitually prevents her from choosing the best men. It enables, moreover, any cross-grained or corrupt constituency to negative Her Majesty's appointments. This is an evil which has grown out of the Reform Act; before that measure it did not sensibly exist, for government and nomination boroughs afforded an irregular way out of the difficulty. Let us see the operation of the defect in a single set of cases—the appointment of the Crown lawyers. The attorney and solicitor-generals ought unquestionably to be selected as being the ablest and soundest lawyers at the bar, holding the opinions of the ministry of the day. There should be no other consideration in their appointment. But as the law now stands, the Queen's choice is limited *first*, to those barristers who can securely count upon a seat in parliament by election or re-election, as the case may be. She is often obliged to pass over the best man, or two or three of the best men, and select her legal agents from among the second or third-rate lawyers in her realm. This is very objectionable in

itself; but the evil does not stop here. The attorney- and solicitor-generals have, by immemorial and admitted custom, the claim to the highest judicial offices which fall vacant during their tenure of office: thus the incompetent or undesirable barrister is raised to the highest judicial dignity, not in consequence of his qualification for the Bench, but simply because he happened some time before to have had a firm hold on some parliamentary constituency. The Judge is appointed, not because he is the light and ornament of the bar,—the profoundest lawyer and the most impartial and dignified mind in his profession,—but because he was a successful candidate at the hustings. It would be indelicate to mention names; but very recent times and nearly every ministry since 1832, could furnish instances of the practical pressure of the evil we are anxious to remove. Nor is the mischief confined to the legal profession. Many a man would make an admirable Under Secretary of State, whose fortune or circumstances do not enable him to enter on a regular parliamentary career, or to encounter a popular constituency, and who is, therefore, to his own discomfiture and to his country's detriment, shut out from office. The most desirable man cannot be appointed Colonial Minister, because his seat, if vacated, might be irrecoverable. Administrations cannot strengthen themselves by the alliance of colleagues who possess the confidence of the general public, because the place for which they sit has been offended by some unpopular vote or speech. We need add no more on this head: the peculiarity of the case is that we have no adverse arguments to meet. *Vis inertiae*, and hatred of novelty, are our only antagonists.

After all, however, these various suggestions, whatever be their value, regard only the *material*, and as it were the corporeal, portion of representative reform.



Something more and something deeper is needed if that reform is to be searching and effective. The wisest arrangements, the most obvious improvements, in the mere machinery of the system, will go little way towards the attainment of the end we seek, without some renovation and elevation of our moral notions in all that regards elections. Unless we can succeed in infusing into the minds of both electors and candidates a due sense of the dignity and solemnity of the function which is exercised by the first, and of the sacredness of the trust which is aspired to by the second, the wisest Reform Bill may be but a lifeless letter. We have just seen a great nation, —boasting itself, not without reason, the most advanced and enlightened upon earth, rich in material wealth, rich in boundless territory, rich in long-descended liberties, rich in all memories which should bind it to live worthily, to think nobly, to act decorously,—proceed to discharge the most solemn and momentous function of its national existence. It had to select, out of all the thousands of capable men whom it contains, those who were to govern it and legislate for it for the next six or seven years; to whose care were to be entrusted its mighty and varied interests; to whose integrity and wisdom were to be committed the concerns, moral and material (as far as government and legislation can affect them), of many millions of citizens, and many scores of millions of dependent tribes; on whose honour and judgment were to depend the character, the comfort, the existence even, of themselves and their children—the progress of many great questions which they have much at heart—the possibilities of a grand future, the continuance of an honourable past! Surely, this was a function to be approached with the utmost gravity, to be discharged with the greatest decorum, to be fulfilled under an absorbing sense of the wide responsibility attaching to it. To

choose those who were to govern, not ourselves only, but myriads of others also, was surely a matter demanding the most careful deliberation, and the most conscientious caution: no selfish motive, no petty passion, no private predilection, could be allowed to interfere where considerations so immense and so various were at stake: every man must bring to the task his most enlightened judgment, his sternest honesty, his highest powers. This is the theory: what was the fact? This is what we might have expected to see: what is it that we have seen?

We have witnessed a scene in which all the better part of our national nature seemed to be abnegated and put off like a garment—which in many of its details should make Englishmen blush for themselves and for their country. We have seen a sort of saturnalia—a licensed holiday for airing all the mean and bad passions of humanity; we have seen thousands drunk with foolish frenzy, hundreds of thousands drunk with ignominious beer; we have seen writers and orators busy in arousing envy, hatred, and malignity, by every stimulant within their reach; in awakening every furious feeling which ought to slumber for ever, and in torpifying every controlling principle which should never for an hour be laid to sleep; we have seen calumny and falsehood indulging themselves to an extent which, in ordinary times, they would not venture to approach; we have seen independent electors selling themselves, some for gold, some for flattery, some for ambition or revenge; we have seen respectable and noble candidates fawning, cringing, and truckling, in order to obtain a distinction which is honourable only when honourably gained; we have seen men who would not steal from a shop, yet complacently pocketing a bribe, and men who, at other times, would counsel no doubtful or disreputable deed, yet now asking a voter to sell his conscience

and his country. In a word, we have witnessed scenes of low, dirty, shameless iniquity, which fill us with a double wonder: wonder that from so strange and guilty a process such a result as even a *decent* House of Commons can ever be obtained; wonder that so many men fitted to be legislators—high-minded, patriotic, honourable men, who desire a seat in parliament from no sordid or unworthy motives—should be content to wade to that eminence through such a sea of clinging and soiling mire.

Not for the wealth of worlds, not for the empire of the old Cæsars, would we consent to lay upon our conscience the sins and sufferings comprised in, and consequent upon, a general election as now conducted—the covetous desires aroused, the malignant passions excited and let loose, the debauchery stimulated and assisted; the wounded self-respect, the tarnished honour, the compromised independence of many candidates; the social ruin of the honest voter who stands sturdily by his principles; the moral ruin of the bribed or bullied voter who deserts them; the conceptions of a whole people incalculably bewildered and relaxed. For it is a mistake to suppose that the evil passes with the hour—that the old sense of right, and justice, and truth revives in its pristine clearness as soon as the temporary storm which obscured it has swept past. “Some leaves fall off every time the tree is shaken.” Let us look for a moment at the varieties of moral mischief produced by the late election, so as to form some estimate of the real cost of a new parliament, as now chosen, to the better elements of a nation’s life. How many candidates, of gentlemanly birth and education—desiring a seat in parliament for the gratification of honest ambition, or for the real object of serving their country and forwarding great public objects—have yet purchased that seat by mean compliances, which ought to leave ever

after a weight upon their consciences, and must almost incapacitate them from turning to good a power which has been so unworthily obtained! How many have "filed their mind," as Shakspeare calls it, to meet the angry passions or foolish prejudices of the ignorant constituents whose votes they were soliciting—have, in clerical fashion, swallowed in the lump all the articles of a political creed, only a few of which they cordially believed—and have stretched, clipped, and warped their opinions to fit those of their committee or their borough! How many have perverted an occasion which, properly used, should be the most serviceable of all for the political education of the people—for instructing them in facts, for enlightening them as to principles, for eradicating false impressions, and preparing them for the proper discharge of their electoral duties—into an opportunity of confirming their prejudices, of endorsing their errors, of sealing and sanctioning their ignorance! How many—how nearly all—by going to their constituents, cap in hand, and *soliciting* their suffrages humbly, beseechingly, and *as a personal favour*—have utterly confounded and perverted in the minds of these men the true nature and reciprocal obligations of the relation between the representative and the electors, and have thus made themselves so many missionaries of misconception and demoralisation among the people! How few, who have gone through the ordeal of a hot contest and a hustings' cross-examination, can bear witness to themselves that they have, in all things, held fast their integrity; that they have evaded no unpopular, but much needed, declaration; that they have glossed over or pushed into the background no unpalatable, but salutary, truth; that they have never apologised and excused, "with bated breath and whispering humbleness," where they ought to have boasted loudly and defended boldly; that they have never been ashamed of that

which really was their glory, and gloried in that which was their shame!

Of drunken debauchery there is always a deplorable amount on these occasions. They are the rich harvest times of the publicans. There are few boroughs, except the very largest, in which beer, gratis and *ad libitum*, is not provided for all electors, and for hundreds who are not electors, but mere hangers-on, whose support, vocal or manual, it is thought may be serviceable. By this means, the election week is the period whence numbers date their ruin. To the reclaimed drunkard, it is often the return of "the sow that was washed to its wallowing in the mire;" to the young man, it is the first fall from which he may never be able to recover; to the wife and children of many a previously sober and industrious labourer, it is the commencement of a long course of domestic wretchedness—of poverty, desertion, and ultimate shame and crime. There are few persons conversant with elections who could not tell individual tales of this sort.

Let us look at another item of the account. It is reported, that bribery has been more extensively resorted to at this election than for many previous years. But be this as it may, there is no doubt that it has prevailed, and always does prevail, to an infamous degree. Now, *what* is bribery when stripped naked, and undraperied by any of the softening phrases in which some faint remains of shame generally endeavour to disguise it? On the part of the corrupter, it is giving a man money to violate his conscience—to say that which he knows to be false—to do that which he knows to be wrong. It is offering him a mess of pottage, not to sell his birthright, but to betray his trust. It is hiring and tempting him to sin. It is, therefore, in the most precise sense, doing the devil's work. On the part of the corrupted, it is taking gold to send to parliament, as

arbiter of the destinies of his fellow-citizens, the man whom he knows that he ought not to send. It is to accept blood-money. It is to lay upon his conscience all the evil which may result from the votes and influence of the man he thus nefariously sends. It is, simply and undisguisedly, selling himself to the tempter. It is to barter his virtue for a bank-note. It is to do that as a man, which in a woman is held the lowest abyss of infamy. The nation—*gentlemen* and poor men—have yet to be taught to view it in this light, before any new Reform Bill can produce its proper fruits.

Of the amount of intimidation and undue influence of every sort which was practised at the late election it is probably impossible to form an exaggerated estimate. Landlords, customers, and employers have held worldly suffering over the heads of the unhappy electors, while priests have brandished spiritual terrors in their face. For voting according to their own judgment, *i. e.* for doing their clear and imperative duty — they have been threatened by the first with poverty, and by the last with damnation. They have been told that if they acted like honest men, their farms would be taken from them, or the sacraments would be refused them. They have thus been compelled either to flinch from their duty, or to do it under peril of earthly destitution or of eternal punishment. This is the mode in which our citizens have been educated in their civic duties. Nor does the guilt of this enormous wickedness lie altogether at the door of those who practise it: it must be divided in a far more equal measure than is commonly allowed, between the actual perpetrators and the nation, which year after year, in spite of warning, remonstrance, and entreaty, has yet persisted in leaving its perpetration possible. Let us look a little more closely at the mode in which intimidation operates. The voter is a humble tenant-farmer, an honest shopkeeper, or an industrious



artisan. He has a wife and children whom he has brought up well. After years of patient toil he has begun to prosper in the world; to enjoy in the present and see in the future the natural recompense of his frugality and diligence. He is about to vote for a candidate whose principles he approves, and on whose character he places a just reliance. But his landlord, his chief customers, or his employers, favour the rival candidate, and scruple at no means of coercion to obtain the victory. They respect no man's conscience, and care for no man's ruin. They exercise their power without delicacy and without mercy. They insist upon the elector voting not as he thinks, but as they think. If he yields to the tyrannical pressure, and consents to purchase safety and worldly comfort by the sacrifice of his integrity, it is not for us, who have first conferred the franchise upon him, and then neglected to secure to him its unfettered exercise, — to judge him severely or to blame him harshly. But his peace of mind is ruined; his self-respect is gone; he feels himself a degraded and dishonoured man; and either his life is one of ceaseless self-reproach, or as is (more probable) his first sin paves the way for future ones, and the declivity becomes easier and sharper with every temptation and with every failure.

But suppose that he stands to his colours, holds fast his integrity, discharges his duty, and performs his promise. He is turned out of doors, and his family perhaps reduced to want. The fruit of long years of persevering and honest industry is lost — he is flung back to the bottom of the hill up which he has been climbing so manfully, with slow and painful steps, ever since his youth; he must leave his garden or his farm; he must sell his shop; he must seek out another home and a new employer; — and all this because he has conscientiously done what his country called upon him

to do, and was bound to protect him in doing. We declare that we scarcely know which most excite our amazement and our reprobation: the robbers and oppressors who inflict these sufferings; the candidates who can bear, year after year, to call on their supporters for such sacrifices; or the statesmen who have been cognisant of these enormities for half a lifetime, yet have made no gigantic or decisive effort to suppress them. We do not understand how, parliament after parliament, they CAN ask poor and struggling electors to go through this fiery furnace of affliction and persecution in order to carry them into power or to sustain them there; or how they can enjoy power so purchased and so cemented!

Of the many other iniquities practised at a general election — all needing only a juster view of civic duty and of civic rights, and a purer and more natural standard of public morality, to sweep them away like chaff — we have left ourselves no room to speak. But when we sum up the whole — the brutal drunkenness; the low intrigues; the wholesale corruption; the barbarous intimidation; the integrity of candidates warped and stained; the honest electors who are ruined; the feeble ones who are suborned and dishonoured; the lies, the stratagems, the slanders, which stalk abroad in the daylight, naked and not ashamed; the desecration of holy words; the soiling of noble names — we stand aghast at the holocaust of victims — of destroyed bodies and lost souls, on whose funeral pile every new parliament is reared. And if we believed, which we do not, that these things are inherent and irremovable in our representative system, we should think it high time to sit down gravely and to count its cost.

In conclusion: while feeling how impossible it is, and how unjust and how unwise it would be, to take our final

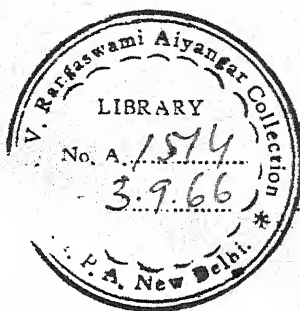
stand on so imperfect and so improvable a measure as the Reform Act of 1832; while satisfied that it would be no very arduous task to devise a scheme of amended representation which every one might hail, and which no one need to dread; and while strongly impressed with the conviction that a period of prosperity and quiet is peculiarly the fitting moment for laying broad and deep the foundations of that harmony among all classes which alone can carry us safely through the perils of turbulent and troublous times, we are yet urgent above all things in preaching the wisdom of a cautionary and self-collecting *pause*, till we have realised our actual position, and deliberately resolved upon our future course. It is not action that we fear, but rash action. Till now, the only points of representative reform that have been really ventilated and at all adequately discussed, regard the lowering of the electoral qualification and the introduction of the ballot—two points which, salient as they are, are yet, if the views we have developed in this paper be correct, only single items of a great account—partial glimpses of a vast question. The subject must now be embraced and treated as a whole; and on that whole, few statesmen, in or out of parliament, who have comprehended its magnitude, have made up their minds, or profess to see their way. It is not the simple, small, and isolated question which superficial and dilettanti politicians on both sides consider it. Before we can be ripe for action, we shall need information which has yet scarcely been asked for, and time for the mature weighing of reflections which have only just begun to suggest themselves. Our next step should be a final one, for we cannot afford to have a perpetual series of Reform Bills. Our next step, even if it be not a final, will, at all events, be a conclusive one, for it will decide in what direction, and probably at what rate, all future steps shall be

made. A false step in advance of what is wise cannot be retraced; a defeat, consequent on attempting to defend an entrenchment in the rear of what is just, cannot be repaired. Our position must be chosen now—the principle by which we are determined to abide—the ground on which we mean to take our stand. It is, therefore, of vital moment that that position should be selected with the most deliberate judgment and should be one that will be defensible not for a time only, but for ever. If as, judging by their language, many seem to think, an overpowering, if not a pure democracy, were our inevitable goal; if universal suffrage, which all deprecate, were sooner or later the destined consummation of our polity; and all that wisdom and patriotism could do were to make the process as slow as might be, to die hard, to concede inch by inch, and postpone to the utmost the decreed evil—we confess we should have little heart to prolong the hopeless contest, and defer the inevitable fate. But we feel no such faithless despondency. We do not believe that, in England, unless the matter be deplorably mismanaged, we need ever concede anything which wisdom and justice command us to withhold. We are so satisfied that a really just position is not only always an avowable and a defensible one, but *the most defensible one*, (and weak and expugnable *only when not avowed*, but masked by a timid faithlessness in the power of truth,) that we are disposed to consider only what *we ought to do*, and to give little heed to representations of what *we must do*. We would seek safety, conciliation, and social harmony not by compromise, but by justice; not by giving to all classes the half of what they ask, but the whole of what they ought to have.

Time, however, for that adequate deliberation before action which can alone render action safe or salutary—time for the nation and its rulers fully to comprehend

all the bearings, immediate and remote, of representative changes—can only be secured by such a course of conduct on the part of parliament and the executive as shall cut away all just ground from under those who clamour for prompt and decisive alterations—as shall leave it no longer in the power of the democratic party, or of the masses, to say, with reason, “We should be more justly governed—our interests would have fairer and fuller consideration—had we a larger share of electoral influence.” To call for delay on the plea of deliberation, and then to employ that delay in maintaining those injustices which are the great arguments against delay, would be a futile and most dangerous course.

THE END.



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